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A black and white illustration of a young boy lying on his back, propped up on his elbows, reading a book. He is wearing a patterned nightgown and is positioned in front of a window with a decorative, diamond-shaped lattice pattern. The illustration is framed by a simple border.

The BIOGRAPHY *of* A BOY

JOSEPHINE DASKAM BACON

Virginia Botwin

N.Y. Dec 1. 1913



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[See page 92

SUSY'S OVERSTRAINED NERVES RELAXED, AND SHE BURST INTO
WILD LAUGHTER

The BIOGRAPHY *of* A BOY

BY
JOSEPHINE DASKAM BACON

AUTHOR OF
"THE MEMOIRS OF A BABY"

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
ROSE O'NEILL

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CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	WHICH DEALS WITH A MOVING INCIDENT . . .	I
II.	WHICH DEALS WITH THE INTELLECTUAL LIFE .	31
III.	WHICH DEALS WITH THE EDUCATION OF NATURE	66
IV.	WHICH DEALS WITH A TIMELY PROBLEM. . .	94
V.	WHICH DEALS WITH ONE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS .	129
VI.	WHICH DEALS WITH COUNTRY LIFE IN AMERICA	164
VII.	WHICH DEALS WITH OUR COMMON NEIGHBORS AND HOW TO KNOW THEM	201
VIII.	WHICH DEALS WITH A LITTLE SCIENCE AND A GREAT DEAL OF HEALTH	235
IX.	WHICH DEALS WITH THE CHANCES AND CHANGES OF THIS MORTAL LIFE	280

ILLUSTRATIONS

SUSY'S OVERSTRAINED NERVES RELAXED, AND SHE BURST INTO WILD LAUGHTER.	<i>Frontispiece</i>
SUSY ESTABLISHED HERSELF COMFORTABLY ON HER HUSBAND'S KNEE	<i>Facing p.</i> 2
SHE LOOMED BEFORE THEM, A DEMI-GODDESS	" 34
"IT KEEPS THEIR MINDS BACK, TOM, AND THAT'S BETTER FOR THEM"	" 42
"DR. BOSKOWITZ WAS WONDERFULLY INTER- ESTING"	" 112
MAKING A COLLAR OF KISSES	" 124
HAMLET AND OPHELIA SAFELY PENNED IN THE GARDEN	" 190
HE TOOK MARTIN TO EVERY CIRCUS	" 220
"I'M NOT GOING TO SCHOOL"	" 238
TOM KISSED HER HASTILY AND DIVED THROUGH THE SLEET	" 242
"AUNT EM WAS PLEASED"	" 246
"SHE'LL SAY SHE HAD HIM FROM THE BOTTLE"	" 250
"NOW, MARTIN, PLEASE HOLD YOUR SHOULDERS MORE EVEN"	" 286
HER HEAD WAS ON TOM'S SHOULDER AND MARTIN'S ON HER KNEE	" 318

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY



I

WHICH DEALS WITH A MOVING INCIDENT

SUSY slipped out of her chair with the quick girlish ease that seven years of married life had failed to steal from her, and established herself comfortably on her husband's knee, scattering legal papers with a fine unconcern.

"Tommy dear," she said thoughtfully, "I've been considering it a great deal lately, and I believe you're right. I think we'd better."

"Yes, dear—*up to the eighteenth of May of that year, inclusive*," he murmured mechanically, one hand rescuing a knowing-looking packet labelled *Motion to Adjourn*.

"It will be so much better for the children, and,

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

then, it *would* be nice to have more bedrooms—down at the beach it's so stupid not to be able to keep but two people over Sunday, and they must be married—”

“Who must be married?” Mr. Wilbour inquired vaguely, snatching a long-waisted, tan-colored document entitled *Branderger vs. Terwilliger* from under his wife and endeavoring vainly to thrust it into his pocket.

“Why, anybody that we have in the blue room,” Susy explained impatiently.

Her husband regarded her seriously, his attention now fully, if somewhat tardily, aroused.

“That seems reasonable,” he admitted. “I am not unduly priggish, I hope, but one has to draw the line somewhere, and really, when you think of it, we have—er—comparatively few friends who fail to qualify as far as that simple conventionality goes—”

Susy bounced severely upon his knee.

“What are you talking about, Tommy?” she interrupted. “All I am saying is that whoever comes must be married, and it's a great nuisance! I suppose you agree to that, don't you?”

Tom stared at her.

“For Heaven's sake, Susan Wilbour,” he exclaimed dramatically, “what has happened? Are you going to be like people in Ibsen? Are



USY ESTABLISHED HERSELF COMFORTABLY ON HER HUSBAND'S KNEE

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

you Advanced? You're like that Englishwoman that writes those novels and has a *salon*! Is Marriage a Nuisance? My dear Toots! and to think that seven years ago . . . ”

“Don't be silly, Tommy,” she cut him short severely; “of course, you know very well I mean nothing of the kind. And I think a *salon* is ridiculous. Mrs. Strenway started to have one once, and there was only water-ices and Mr. Strenway played bridge all the time. You needn't laugh. Everybody was disgusted. I am not discussing marriage at all, but only saying that it's a pity that nobody but people who are married . . . I mean, that it is too bad that people have to *be* married in order . . . Oh, Tom, how horrid you are! I don't think you're a bit kind, and I sha'n't say another word about it, and you'll be sorry, too, for it was all on your account!”

She endeavored to leave her seat with dignity, but this is a difficult feat to accomplish when the seat happens to be one's husband, unless the husband in question is disposed to assist one's descent. Tom was not, and after a few helpless jerks Susy subsided into a stern martyrdom which yielded before long to his irresistible chuckling.

“Never mind, Toots,” he managed to get out at last. “I believe in you. Appearances are against you, but you mean well at bottom, and

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

though you seem immoral I am sure your principles are sound. What you are trying to say—”

“I could say it well enough, Tom, if only you'd let me alone for a moment! What I mean is that it is horrid to have only one guest-room in the summer.”

“I know it,” he admitted sympathetically, but with one eye on *Branderger* vs. *Terwilliger*.

“And if you knew the horrid things Martin hears in the park—he will chase after the rough boys. And Thomas can't move a step without a nurse. . . . Tom, I simply won't talk to you if you won't pay some attention to what we're talking about!”

“But I am—I do,” he cried penitently, for Susy was evidently hurt in earnest now, “really, Toots! We were talking about the—the blue room and the park and—and nurses!”

“Not at all,” said Mrs. Wilbour briefly, sweeping the documents to the floor and grasping the lapels of her husband's coat, looking him in the eye, meantime, with that firm, intentional kindness which is supposed to be so efficient in subduing the inhabitants of the jungle.

“We're not talking about that at all, Tom Wilbour!”

“Then what are we talking about?” said Mr. Wilbour resignedly.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"We're talking about moving into the country," and Susy settled herself comfortably against his shoulder.

"Oh-h-h!" Tom drew a long whistling breath and dismissed *Branderger* vs. *Terwilliger* definitely.

"Really, Toots? Would you like it?"

"I told you you'd be sorry," she added contentedly, "and it doesn't cost so very much to put in a new bath-room if you have it directly over the old one, does it?"

Tom gasped, but made a noble effort.

"I believe not," he said gravely. "Had you any particular bath-room in mind?"

Susy looked at him with real reproach and shook the lapels impatiently.

"Why, Tom Wilbour," she cried, "as if you hadn't picked it out yourself! Who was it admired that vine over the side porch? Who was it that said we could bottle the spring water and sell it? Who told Aunt Emma that *that* newel post was really Colonial?"

Tom drew a long breath and appeared to invoke the shades of a dim and distant past, while his wife shook him gently at intervals as if to settle his faculties.

"Oh!" he said at last, "do you mean that old white house on the Albany Post Road last summer?"

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"You didn't talk about it like that, then." And the dignified forbearance in his wife's tone would have deceived any one but her husband.

Mr. Wilbour, startled by a sudden and unusually peremptory ring at the door-bell, jumped slightly and endeavored to turn the movement into one of convulsive admiration for the old white house, which aroused but faint memories after the lapse of several busy months.

"Ah—that was a fine old place!" he observed with suspiciously sudden enthusiasm. "If you're really interested in the country, dear, we might go out and look about a bit this spring, when I can get a little of this work off—"

"This spring, Tom!" It was clear that he had struck the wrong note. "The spring is the time to move, silly! you look about before that. Our lease expires in April, you know, and we can't wait till then, can we? We must move then."

"Oh!" Tom shuddered, not entirely theatrically, and gazed beseechingly at his wife. "Don't say that awful word to me, Toots dear, even in jest," he begged. "Aside from the fact that we can hardly go into this without a little more serious consideration, I think the mere thought of moving would nail me to this spot forever, even if we knew where we were going to move to! Do you remember the awful occasion when we moved from

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

Forty-seventh Street? You may not recall the fact that I had to help collect Thomas's crib and two dozen collars and a drawer full of evening shirts from the middle of Sixth Avenue and blocked the traffic for half an hour boosting that infernal chiffonier into the van, with everybody grinning around me and the policemen a disgrace to the Force! Move, indeed! When I think—"

Here the door-bell rang sharply again, and Susy looked apprehensively toward the window.

"But you wouldn't have had to think of it, Tom, if you hadn't insisted in following them in a cab, you know," she interrupted soothingly; "and anyway, we wouldn't employ them again. They were really second-class people"—Tom snorted violently—"and this time we'd do it very differently."

"This time!" he repeated vaguely.

"You see," Susy went on, glancing expectantly toward the library door from time to time, and producing, as if by some feat of legerdemain, a small pea-green pamphlet from nowhere in particular, "all these people have given their full names and addresses, and lots of them are in New York, so we could call them up on the telephone any time and see—"

"See what?" her husband inquired suspiciously,

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

viewing the closely printed pamphlet coldly. "What do you mean, Susy?"

"See whether Slide & Bumpus do all they say they do," Mrs. Wilbour replied calmly.

"Who in time are Slide & Bumpus?" he demanded, snatching the booklet mechanically from her outstretched hand.

"Why Wear Yourself Out, Moving?" the title-page urged cordially. "Let us Attend to it while You are at the *Matinée*! Then Return to your New Home! We Absolutely Guarantee that you will find Everything In Perfect Order there!"

Tom grinned sardonically.

"I suppose you remember the evening we found Martin's electric railroad spiked down in perfect order to the library floor and my bed in perfect order in the laundry, don't you?" he inquired.

Susy shook her head impatiently.

"But these people are utterly different, Tom!"

"I hope so, I hope so, my dear. Not that I have the slightest interest in Messrs. Slide & Bumpus, but I should hate to think that any firm in this universe remotely resembled the brutal pirates that littered Sixth Avenue with my underwear!"

"Here's a good one," Susy remarked abruptly, "this one from Miss Julia Dart Olmstead—'the well known woman writer,'" she quoted hastily

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

from the booklet, as Miss Olmstead's name failed to evoke any sign of recognition from her husband.

"I should feel myself lacking in common gratitude were I to omit this utterly unsolicited testimonial to Messrs. Slide & Bumpus," Susy announced eagerly. "I have moved nine times in the course of a perhaps unusually varied life, and to state that destruction has followed in the wake of eight of these upheavals is to put the case mildly. But since Mr. Slide's personal and gentlemanly ministrations to my household gods, I can truly say that I am quite willing to move nine times more—if he will attend to it! Beyond the collecting of my personal baggage (clothes, manuscripts, etc.) I had absolutely nothing to do with the transfer of the entire contents of my apartment from Fifteenth Street to One Hundred and Forty-first, and not so much as a drop of ink was spilled or mislaid. Indeed, an old and valued fountain-pen, which I had carelessly left in the sideboard, was the first sight that greeted my astonished eyes, in its old place on my pen-rack in the opened desk! Mr. Slide's work was a revelation to me. His charges were little more than I have been accustomed to pay for work of a vastly different character, and I cordially recommend his services to any one who, like myself,

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

finds life all too short for the nervous strain of attending personally to his Lares and Penates.

"There!" Susy finished triumphantly, "you can see what *she* thinks of them!"

"Yes, and I can see what I think of her!" Mr. Wilbour replied promptly. "I think she needs a keeper—not a mover. I'll bet they're sorry up at One Hundred and Forty-first Street now! 'Not a drop of ink mislaid,' forsooth! She must be a bird. Let's see the book, anyhow."

Sweetly unsuspecting of the cause of his interest, Susy handed her husband the pea-green pamphlet and listened with earnest attention to his spirited rendering of the almost fulsome admiration of one Jos. P. Weeks for the invaluable Mr. Slide.

"*If any one had told me,*" began Mr. Weeks, with engaging candor, "*that Slide & Bumpus could do what they do do, I should say they lied. When my wife wanted to move into the city I put my foot down hard, because I well remembered what an awful time we had in moving down from Troy. But you know what a woman is, and of course I had to give in or be miserable. But mind you, I said, whatever breaks, breaks, and we either go without or eat from the pieces. 'There won't be anything broken that's not replaced on a guarantee,' she said,*

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

and so it was, for in moving from Morristown to New York not so much as a lamp-chimney cracked! I was at the office all day, and my wife did nothing but pack the trunks for children and self. She assured me she had often had more trouble in starting for the seashore. The only accident was the death of my daughter Ethel's pet canary-bird, but as he was eight years old we feel that it was probably due to shock and could not fairly be laid to their door. But even for this Slide & Bumpus immediately offered a new canary, which was, of course, not accepted. I advise every one who thinks of moving to consult Mr. Slide, and promise them they will not regret it.

“(Signed) JOS. P. WEEKS.”

Long before the conclusion of Mr. Weeks's artless discourse Susy realized that Tom's appreciation of the booklet was slightly different in character from her own, and she made futile endeavors to snatch it from him; but he held it out of her reach easily, and read with unnecessary expression disconnected eulogies upon the extraordinarily gifted firm in question, while she hopped vainly after him, divided between wrath and laughter.

“Well, if you think these aren't respectable people,” he vouchsafed at last, “here's Mrs. Brander Beekman—I hope she's good enough for you! Here's what *she* says:

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"I cheerfully bear witness to Messrs. Slide & Bumpus's competent and satisfactory methods. In moving my establishment from Washington Square to East Sixty-eighth Street (of which they assumed entire supervision) no loss whatever occurred, and only one breakage—the stem of a hock-glass in Bohemian ware. As replacing this was out of the question, the set being specially imported, Mr. Slide had the glass repaired so expertly that it is, if anything, stronger and more artistic than the remainder of the set. Mr. Slide is quite at liberty to use my name as a reference.

(Signed)

"FRANCES B. BRANDER BEEKMAN.

"Well, well, well!" said Mr. Wilbour thoughtfully, "what do you think of that, now? See here, Toots," casually raising the book an inch beyond her grasp, "do you suppose if we should ever move and Slide & Bumpus took charge of it, they'd cover these leather chairs on the way to the 'new home'? Maybe they'd re-line my hat-box 'while you were at the matinée!' Didn't you say the piano needed—"

"Hush, Tom, I think he's coming now!" Susy cried nervously.

"Coming! Who's coming?" Tom demanded.

"Why, Mr. Slide, of course—now, do be careful,

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

Tom, and don't hurt his feelings, please. He's really quite gentlemanly."

The green booklet dropped from her husband's hand; his face fell.

"Susan Wilbour, will you tell me why in Heaven's name a moving man should come here, when we have no place to move to and no idea of moving, really? What possessed you—"

"Sh, sh, Tom! He's up-stairs now. I was trying to tell you—Aunt Emma and I went out there last week and got the refusal of that place with the vine—it does no harm to just get the refusal, Tommy, dear, and it's a great bargain—it's bound to be snapped up! And Mr. Slide said he'd look in, in case you wanted him to make the estimate, that's all. It doesn't bind you to anything— Oh, Tom, *don't* look so stupid! Please! There—there he is!—Come in!"

Susy arranged her features pleasantly, but Tom was utterly unable to do this and stared with a mixture of surprise and horror at Mr. Slide, a dapper little man with reddish hair and a meek expression, who cast such an appraising glance over the room, even in the act of entering it, that the master of the house gripped the arms of his chair instinctively, as if in fear of its slipping into a van from under him!

But no one even slightly acquainted with Mr.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

Thomas Wilbour would have expected him to remain for long quiescent in such circumstances, and Susy, in the midst of a perfunctory discussion of the weather, saw with despair that her husband was about to revenge himself for her sudden disclosures by an exhibition of what was known in the family as his "ridiculous behavior."

"And when have you decided to move us, Mr. Slide?" he inquired suavely. "I don't wish to seem intrusive, but it will take a little time for those 'clothes, manuscripts, etc.' that even Miss—Miss—ah, yes, Miss Julia Dart Olmstead, the well-known woman writer, found herself obliged to attend to."



THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"Tom!" Susy murmured beseechingly, but he only smiled politely and continued.

"There was Jos. P. Weeks, too—you know, Mr. Slide, how his wife packed the trunks for children and self! Don't tell me we're leaving this afternoon!"

Mr. Slide chuckled nervously and glanced at Susy.

"Hardly, Mr. Wilbour, hardly," he said soothingly, "we require forty-eight hours' notice, you know. You'll be warned, sir, you'll be warned!"

"Ah!" Tom affected an airy relief. "And have you decided on the 'new home,' Mr. Slide? I hadn't known that we were moving till a few moments ago, and—"

"Please, Tom!" Susy implored, her eyes fastened distractedly on their visitor. But her fears were baseless. Mr. Slide only wagged his head wisely and indicated his hostess with an almost courtly wave of the hand.

"Ask the madam, Mr. Wilbour, ask the madam!" he cried chirpily, "that's my advice, right along! No use making any plans without the madam, I tell all the gentlemen. Just leave it to her, sir. As I've often remarked to Mr. Bumpus, when it comes to moving, the sexes is reversed, you might say, and we always look to the lady!"

"Like Jos. P. Weeks," Tom suggested thought-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY



fully, "he seems to have come to that conclusion, too."

"I see you're familiar with our booklet," Mr. Slide ended cordially. "We think that's a pretty interesting lot o' testimonials, Mr. Wilbour—and I hope we may have the privilege of addin' yours to it," he concluded neatly.

At this climax to the conversation Tom threw up his hands and tacitly relinquished all further satire. Indeed, when upon repairing to the nursery at the top of the house he found his two-year-old son and namesake busily engaged in packing six picture-blocks, a ball of twine, and a badly worn woolly lamb on three wheels into his golf-bag, and rescued from Martin, his first-born, two razors, four match-boxes, and a miraculously

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

intact ink-bottle, which the misguided youth was fitting cleverly into Susy's dressing-case (on the ground that he was an expert mover and was preserving these forbidden necessities from the baby), Tom resigned himself to what appeared an inevitable exodus.

As a matter of fact, the whole affair proved far more practical than its whimsical introduction had warranted. The vine-covered house, which he had honestly admired, was in perfect repair, fresh, and habitable; its price, at no time excessive, assumed the character of a really good investment when the owner declared himself ready to stand by his original offer to Susy, in spite of the railroad's decision, published two days later, to build a new and attractive station within a mile of the property; a neighbor on the point of moving to California offered a "hired man," horses, carriages, garden tools, and a spotty red cow with her daughter, at a surprisingly low figure; the road commission promised a macadamized countryside in the course of the year; and altogether the project, though apparently an unreasonably casual one, was far from the mere hasty impulse it appeared, and Tom admitted generously that, like many others of Susy's sudden manœuvres, it was likely to be a great success when once he had caught his breath.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

On a mild promising morning in late March they journeyed thither for a final survey, six-year-old Martin hanging ecstatically to his father's hand, chanting to all who crossed his path the golden glory of fishing, skating, tree-climbing, and pony-riding that was to irradiate his future years; while Susy murmured a steady undertone of box-hedges, table-butter churned in the pantry, lattice-work in the windows, and brick paths to the inevitable pergola that closed the vista of her dreams.

They spent a happy day, pacing off the garden with the new gardener, inspecting the neighbor's cow, testing the low-hung phaeton, which supplied a delightfully providential tiny folding-seat for Martin, and allotting for the last time the pleasant, generous rooms; and when Tom saw the neat plans for these last, with the disposition of the larger pieces of furniture carefully indicated, the very rugs labelled, and listed directions for the unpacked china, and heard from Susy of her day-long consultation on the spot with Mr. Slide, he formally apologized for his unwarrantable derision of that artist in details and admitted that the terrors of moving were banished forever, together with the tallow-candle and the stage-coach. With characteristic ardor he even meditated a testimonial along these lines to the firm, announcing his am-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

bition to outdo Miss Julia Dart Olmstead, that well-known woman writer, in the matter of convincing detail, and at least vie with the friendly Jos. P. Weeks in sturdy enthusiasm. He heartily agreed with Susy's quotation to the effect that she would be really more in the way than otherwise on the occasion of the settling (the ladies, Mr. Slide volunteered, seemed to upset the moving-men, somehow), and though he grinned mockingly at her almost superstitious determination to attend the matinée, even as the pea-green pamphlet had urged, he could not produce any urgent argument to the contrary, and deposited Bell, the nurse, with her youngest charge, in an early afternoon train, received her assurances that the last van-load had left in good order, and that the cook and housemaid were even now ready to begin their accustomed tasks in their new surroundings, and went back to his office serenely, only regretting that an unusually pressing day's work forbade his accompanying Susy and Martin to the afternoon performance of *Buffalo Bill*—one of the saint's days in his son's calendar.

Lost in work, he woke with a start to the realization that he had but fifteen minutes in which to catch the train, and his muttered exclamations as he dashed for the intermediate conveyances were productive of much simple amusement to those

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

unfortunate city dwellers in his way, who breathed the unwholesome air of their crowded streets with some leisure, at least—or so it appeared to his perturbed mind. Swinging himself onto the last car, as the train pulled out, he just escaped the fine, dense drizzle that quickly enveloped the landscape; before he had found Susy in the long crowded train a heavy rain was falling from a prematurely darkened sky.

But no journey could seem dismal to Martin, whose soul was steeped in the gorgeous pageants of the afternoon, and he prattled ceaselessly of Indians and scouts, of trick mules and wigwams, of cannon and rough-riding, while even the delay of half an hour, while the wreckers cleared a derailed freight-train from their course, failed to exhaust his descriptive zeal. For years afterward Tom connected all such delays and rainy home-comings with a confused sense of half-remembered Cossacks, standing on their bare-backed steeds, yelling terribly, of deafening shots and serimmages, of painted red men, and finally of some great absurd calamity connected with all this—so deeply was this journey impressed upon his mind, so undreamed of was its ending.

The first of the livery-men drawn up in a straggling row by the little country station recognized them promptly, to their comfort, and enclosed

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

them quickly in his steaming, curtained carriage.

"I just come back from your new place, Mr. Wilbour—been helpin' the movers!" he called cheerily, as he pushed in the dripping suit-cases and canvas hold-alls. "You got a good bargain when you bought that place!"

A genuine London fog received them: the feeble light from the lantern attached to the back wheel barely cut across it; they might have been driving through China. The road seemed tiresomely long, with none of the familiar daytime landmarks, and Susy, more exhausted from the strenuous afternoon than she cared to admit, grew momentarily despondent, and fearful that some accident had delayed or deterred even the impeccable Slide & Bumpus. Perhaps Bell had made a mistake . . . perhaps the kitchen things . . . suppose there was no cereal for Thomas?

"Or for me!" Martin suggested, with the suspicion of a whine. "I haven't had any cereal since the last day before this one! I'm afraid I'll be sick if I don't have some pretty soon—I think I feel a little sick, now—"

"There, there, Martin, that will do. Here we are! All lighted and comfy, Toots—there's Bell!"

A path of light cut through the mist, and the travellers scudded to shelter. The open door

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

showed a hospitable hall, a bright fire that flickered on all the familiar mahogany, a satisfying gleam of linen and silver in the dining-room. Thomas was reported fast asleep, unbelievably full of cereal, and every picture, every tea-cup tallied perfectly with the inventory, in Bell's voluble recital.

"Mr. Slide told me to tell you how sorry he was, ma'am, not to be able to come himself, but Mr. Bumpus knew all about it, he said, and was every bit as good. There's a handle off the old secretary, but he'll attend to it. There's only eleven salad-plates, but I guess there never was no more, Mrs. Wilbour. I—"

"Oh, dear, never mind, Bell! I'm so tired!" sighed Susy. "Take Martin to bed. Tom, dear, did you think the furniture would make such a difference? It seems so crowded. The sideboard looks simply enormous. I suppose it will seem nicer to-morrow . . ."

"They've left a lot of the old stuff—that's what's the matter," said Tom critically. "You wouldn't think the few old sticks that man had would make such a difference. I told him to pitch it all into the barn—"

"So he did, Mr. Wilbour," explained Bell, who, well aware of her present importance, was delaying Martin's retirement from the family circle.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"He was real cross about it—he said you'd ought to have said how much there was—he was awful rough with it."

"Nonsense," said Tom decidedly, "Slide saw it all. I don't care what they did with it, anyhow. Isn't there any dinner for us?"

"That's another thing, Mrs. Wilbour," and Bell moved confidentially nearer. "Mary's very upset about the range. You know you said it was almost new, and she counted a good deal on that, but you didn't say how small it was. There isn't any room—"

"There won't be any room for Mary if I hear any more nonsense," said Mr. Wilbour firmly. "Tell her we're here, Bell. . . . Dear me, Susy, did you intend that serving-table to stand out here?"

"No; but I can't see where it could go in the dining-room, I must say," and Susy studied the room discontentedly. "And the living-room has too much in it, too—it seems so small."

"We're tired," said her husband sensibly—"tired and hungry. It'll be different to-morrow. Are the bedrooms all right, Bell?"

"Yes, sir, except that that old Mr. Bumpus would put your bed and Mrs. Wilbour's into that big room, Mr. Wilbour. It was no use to argue with him. He said if any two beds was to be in one room it must be them two, the room was so

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

dreadful big. I thought 'twas meant for the nursery, from the pictures on the wall-paper, but he said 'twas a big double room, and there was no sense in putting one bed in it and then have two in a smaller room."

"The silly old thing!" Susy cried pettishly, dropping into a seat at the table, and dragging the plan of the furniture from her hand-bag. "Here's the exact duplicate of his copy; there, Tom, read it! 'Mrs. Wilbour's room, southwest corner; old-rose paper; three-quarter brass bed with round columns; between windows. Mr. Wilbour's room, connecting; three-quarter brass bed with square columns, facing Franklin stove.' Could anything be plainer? How could he directly disobey that?"

"Yes'm," said Bell virtuously. "He showed Mary that paper—I was undressing Thomas at the time—and explained to her. He said ladies got excited sometimes and didn't put down exactly what they meant, but he understood that and always used his judgment, he'd had so much experience."

Tired as he was Tom laughed, and the sound cleared away a little of the impalpable disappointment both had felt since they entered the house. It seemed inexplicably cramped, not so fresh and spaced as they had pictured it. Everything was in place, indeed, and not badly placed, though in

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

more than one instance the allotted areas had proved insufficient and the furniture had crowded uncomfortably. But the change from the old environment had turned out a little disastrous, it had to be admitted frankly. The ceilings, which had seemed beautifully proportioned, looked strangely low, now that the high-boy and old secretary nearly reached them; the fire-irons dwarfed the hearth, which had seemed ample in the empty room; the very doors had narrowed in their full city draperies.

In silence they fell upon the soup and roast that even the small range had not spoiled, and under the cheering influence of hot, freshly cooked food Susy smiled again and Tom proposed a thorough survey, even allowing Martin, sleepy with the sudden warmth and double rations of toast - and - milk and molasses-cake, trium-



THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

phantly eaten with the grown people, to accompany them.

They toiled up the stairs, each bravely concealing from the other the shock of their narrowness, when carpeted; and the utter inadequacy of the landing, where the grandfather clock, their pride in the city, nearly crowded unwary climbers over the rail. In the upper hall Susy stopped, staring.

"I can't help it, Tom, but I'm all turned around!" she cried despairingly. "What is Martin's room doing there? Are those stairs, beyond the bath-room?"

"That's not the bath-room, Mrs. Wilbour," Bell announced instructively, "that's Thomas's and mine. It's awful small. And I hate to have Martin 'way off alone, there. He does get so uncovered. I told that Mr. Bumpus so, but he said orders was orders. But ain't these floors lovely, ma'am?"

Tom glanced unconsciously at the elaborate inlay under his feet, stared, lifted the rug, and stared again. He looked up hastily at Susy, but she was arguing with the obstinate Bell as to the whereabouts of Martin's room, and did not notice her husband when he gasped audibly, seized the handle of the nearest door, and plunged into the large room where Mr. Bumpus's experience had

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

placed the two three-quarter brass beds of Susy's plan.

In a moment he emerged, and the extraordinary expression of his countenance arrested her on the verge of her own further exploration.

"Why, Tom, what is it? Is—is anything wrong?"

"Toots," he said, his voice quivering strangely, "oblige me by looking into that room. Keep calm, now. Only look."

Hesitatingly, her eyes fixed on his changing features, Susy moved to the door, turned the handle slowly, and entered. A moment later a short, breathless shriek brought them all in to her. Sitting on the three-quarter brass bed with square columns which has been mentioned before, she pointed wildly to an old-fashioned fireplace with a high, heavy fender in front of it and quaint porcelain tiles set about it. Around the wall, at the level of the high fender, ran a frieze representing Jack and Jill, the Three Blind Mice, the Death of Cock Robin, and other classic tragedies, sufficiently decorative, to be sure, but not of a character usually selected by adults for the adornment of their sleeping-apartments.

"Tom! Tom Wilbour!" she cried hysterically,

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY



“what is this room? Where is it? Where are we?”

“My dear,” her husband replied with the quiet tones of utter resignation, “to be perfectly frank with you, I haven’t the least idea! I feel like friend Jos. P. Weeks: if any one had told me that Slide & Bumpus could have done what they *have* done, I should say they lied! They’ve moved us, Toots, they’ve moved us—but the Lord knows where!”



II

WHICH DEALS WITH THE INTELLECTUAL LIFE



THE excitement of the hunt for their real home, the pleasure of finding it, and finding it far more suited to their needs than the one provided by Messrs. Slide & Bumpus, and the breathless dash of establishing themselves in it swept along the house of Wilbour in a wild rush, an actual fury of living, that caused their entire past to appear dull and uneventful in the extreme. Mad meals were snatched here and there in unheard-of places; a general flavor of cold meat and casual desserts marked the period; and between their contrite efforts to reinstate the possessions of the innocent and ignorant owners of the wrong

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

house, and their strenuous dismantling of their own effects, life grew almost too complicated for patience. Susy, having staked her reputation for efficiency upon Slide & Bumpus—and lost it—refused with characteristic disgust any further commerce with any sort of professional assistance, and got those articles which a certain well-known woman writer would undoubtedly have described as “her household gods” over the necessary half mile of country road with very much the primitive methods adopted by Mrs. Noah on the occasion of that lady’s retirement to the Ark.

Relying upon Bell’s known accuracy of memory, they arranged such of the original furniture as had withstood the shock of Mr. Bumpus’s scornful casting out, according to the nurse’s proud and apparently competent directions; but many of the pieces had only too clearly seen their best days before they were so rudely thrown into the barn, and that the short exodus had not improved them was terribly obvious. To replace things of such character was difficult if not impossible, and Susy swayed between tears and laughter, as battered ebony easels, limping bamboo tables, suspiciously ancestral fire-screens and incredible crayon portraits emerged from the great heap in the old barn, shrank almost visibly under the caustic comments of Mr. Wilbour and found their way into painfully

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

prominent corners under Bell's important guidance

"They must be a queer lot," Tom grumbled disgustedly, unearthing an extraordinary amateur oil-painting of Niagara by moonlight: a yard of light green water, adorned with what appeared to be saucers of whipped cream.

"Think of having matched-wood floors and tiled fireplaces like that, and then pictures like this!"

"Oh, I don't know," Susy answered perversely, "other people have different sorts of things, too. Look at that old Sistine Madonna we have to keep in sight on account of Aunt Emma!"

Tom snorted argumentatively, and stood Niagara-by-moonlight bottom side up, which rather improved it than otherwise, in his wrath.

"Oh, come now, Toots!" he burst forth, "don't be an idiot! Engravings of the Sistine Madonna are bad enough, I admit, but Raphael never compromised himself to this extent!" He glared at the absurd whipped-creamy water and staggered under it to the hall, where Bell serenely directed its location.

This easy mastery of events, as displayed by their nurse, completely captivated Martin and his brother. Long had she represented to them the height of executive ability and implacable authority; long had her judgment and address decid-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

ed the ultimate issues of their small lives; but never before had they seen their parents thus hang upon her lightest word, and she loomed before them accordingly—a demi-goddess, a sort of benignant Fate. At her command their father rolled a clumsy square piano across the room, and fitted it, with compressed lips, into an inconvenient alcove. On her pause for reflection their mother paused also, a dented “Rogers’ group” balanced at shoulder height, her brows knitted anxiously till Bell unbent her own and waved her hand toward a plush-topped, three-legged table under the most haunting of the crayon portraits. There were no inconsequent bursts of laughter, now, at this wonder-nurse’s remarks, no amused tolerance of her persistencies, no criticism of her methods. Clearly she was appreciated at last, held at her true value, placed properly at the head of the household, and Martin watched her with proprietary pride.

The whole experience of moving had, indeed, been most entertaining and instructive to the youth. Never in the six years of his life had he been so left to his own devices, so free to administer to Thomas that valuable fraternal discipline to which so many of our young men owe whatever strength of character they can call their own to-day. To tell the truth, Thomas seemed



SHE LOOMED BEFORE THEM, A DEMI-GODDESS

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

not wholly appreciative of the advantages of this freedom on his brother's part, and after some unusual bout of brotherly exertion on his ungrateful behalf would often call to mind a small, too-thoroughly-snuffed candle! But on the whole he admired Martin and respected his trousers and his temper equally, and his roly-poly little person was considered reasonably safe in his brother's custody.

On the evening of the never-to-be-forgotten day of Bell's supremacy the younger members of the Wilbour family snatched a hasty supper of hominy and milk, served somewhat irrelevantly in a cut-glass salad-bowl, although eaten with pewter spoons from the kitchen. They were sitting side by side upon a piano-bench drawn up to the library table-desk, and the unprejudiced observer might have been pardoned his mild curiosity as to Bell's reasons for selecting the exact middle of the lower hall for the scene of the meal—their first in their new home. No one could move himself or his burden in or out of the house without bumping into some one of the trio; the sharp edge of the piano-bench threatened every shin within a yard of it; each interesting arrival or departure elicited a whoop of congratulation from Martin and diverted Thomas's attention from his hominy with woful results to the mahogany surface of the

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

desk. But wild horses could not have dragged their nurse from what she considered, evidently, to be a commanding position, and her air of easy authority when directing the only assistants Susy would tolerate—two thick-skulled Italian laborers—lost nothing in her admiring charges' estimation from the fact that her remarks were quite unintelligible to the persons addressed.

"Everybody minds you, don't they, Bell?" said Martin respectfully, recovering from a violent shock as his father's chiffonier trotted by him on two mysterious legs, and just saving Thomas's last spoonful from drenching the rug, as that interested infant tried to consume it with his head twisted around between his shoulder-blades.

"They might do worse sometimes," Bell replied conservatively. "I'm not so helpless as some.—Here, take that into the bath-room! Bath-room! Understand?"

"*Si, si, signora,*" the Italian murmured pacifically, trotting into the dining-room and depositing the nickel sponge-rack and soap-dish on either side the fernery on the sideboard.

"If your mother 'd speak louder, those Dagoes would understand her as well as me," she added didactically, "but you can't boss 'em with hat-pins in your mouth—not properly, that is."

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"No baf-room!" Thomas announced abruptly, with one of his disconcerting appreciations of the situation—never to be counted on, never to be guarded against. "No baf-room: diney-woom! Bad man run off Thomas' soapey-dish. No sponge-baf fahver's diney-woom! Thomas put in tub. Good-bye—come again, thank you!"

"You stay where you are, Thomas Wilbour! What are you talking about? Of course you won't have a sponge-bath in the dining-room! The idea! Now you go right on and eat that bread. It's too fresh for you, but it can't be helped, with things as upset as they are. Try to chew it good, now. Will Thomas chew?"

"No. Thomas get soapey-dish. No chew."

"There's where you're foolish," remarked his father, coming up unexpectedly with an armful of sash-curtains on one arm and three armfuls of portières on the other. His articulation was obscured by the draperies, but his intonation was unmistakable.

"If I had some soap—or anything—to chew, you can bet I'd chew it! I've had little or nothing since those sardines and mustard pickles this noon. Bell, isn't anything ready yet? I can't stand this much longer. Really."

"I'll see, Mr. Wilbour, but I don't hardly think so," returned Bell somewhat patronizingly; "those

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

Dagoes are dreadful slow. And they took the kitchen things out into the stable the first time, you know, and they had to be all brought back. But I'll see."

Tom sank dispiritedly upon the portières and stared hungrily at the empty salad-bowl.

"Lord! I wish we'd stayed with Niagara-by-moonlight," he sighed; "there was a fire in *that* range. What are you eating, Susan Wilbour? Where did you get it?"

"Lemon layer-cake," said Susy complacently, wiping off the last crumbs with a dusty hand and depositing a bronze bust of Napoleon in a terra-cotta flower-bowl. "Mary made it just before we came and forgot about it. There's some more in the linen-closet. Right next your hat-box. Children, why aren't you in bed?"

"We haven't got any beds," Martin informed her cheerfully, "so I guess we can't never prob'ly go any more for a long, l-o-n-g time. They won't go into the door—they're too fat. So the Dagoes took 'em all apart and now they're *too* apart, you know. So Thomas is going to sleep in the bath-tub and I'm going to sit up late. See?"

"I wish you wouldn't train that boy to say 'See?' that way," Tom observed irritably; "he sounds like a Yiddish necktie peddler. Heaven

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

knows, I'm not particularly—er, er—particular, but—”

“You're particularly idiotic,” Susy interrupted warmly, “if you think that I or anybody else trains him to say that! I don't know where in the world the horrid child picked it up. You might as well say that I train Thomas to blow his nose on his sleeve—why don't you? He does it all the time.”

She picked Napoleon out of the terra-cotta jar and departed with her own nose at a haughty angle, feeling, evidently, that she had accomplished a retreat worthy of her burden. No such exit was possible for Tom, who sat silently on his portières, hopelessly entangled in sash-curtains, hungry, sulky, and deprived of even such relief as his bursts of rhetoric afforded him by the absence of any audience, for Bell had tactfully removed the objects of parental criticism, and the miscellaneous crowded hall was his alone.

But the ten minutes' gloom which shrouded him till Susy appeared forgivingly, staggering under a heart-warming tray of fragrant beefsteak and coffee, buttered rolls and jam tarts, was not without its momentous effect; for a week later, when, in his own metaphor, the smoke of battle had cleared away, when the soap-dish and sponge-rack no longer polluted the sideboard, and each function

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

of life was restored to its normal scene, Tom seized the occasion of a Saturday afternoon family stroll about the estate for opening his mind upon what he had evidently come to regard as an important subject.

"Susy," he said abruptly, "when is Binks going to school?"

The direct and unadorned nature of this remark would have indicated to any one acquainted with Mr. Wilbour's methods that he was extremely doubtful as to its effects on the listener, but quite determined to pursue the matter. This attitude on his part was, however, entirely unnecessary, for Susy, to his surprise, replied meekly: "Why, whenever you say, Tom dear. Do you want him to go now?"

Relieved by this active co-operation, Tom relaxed and descended to explanation.

"I don't doubt it's all right, you know, to put it off for girls as long as you want—it probably doesn't make any difference. But Binks is a boy, you see, dear, and he is getting just a little . . . well, just a little . . ."

"I suppose so," said Susy thoughtfully. "He certainly is a boy."

"You think so yourself, don't you, Toots?"

"I—I suppose so," Susy admitted, "though I *did* want to try keeping him out a year or two



"IT KEEPS THEIR MINDS BACK, TOM, AND THAT'S BETTER
FOR THEM"

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

more—every one seems to think it's better, nowadays."

"But why?" Tom demanded. "I know you said that last year, but what's the point?"

"Why, it keeps their minds back, Tom, and—and that's better for them, you know."

"Why?" her husband repeated obstinately. "Don't they need all the mind that's coming to them?"

"Oh, of course, Tom. Don't be silly! But don't you remember that awfully clever woman we met at the Upsons', that writes those beautiful stories? She has a little girl, you know, and she said herself that if the child ever learned to count more numbers than she was years old, she was going to spank her! You see what *she* thinks about it."

"Yes, I see," replied her husband coldly, "and I also see that I don't give a continental hang for her and her books. You mark my words, Toots, if ever you hear a darn-fool thing to-day, you can make up your mind that some woman said it that writes books. They're sure to. Who wrote those books about bringing up children that Aunt Em was always studying when she lived with us? Women. Who lectured those imbecile lectures you used to hand out good money for? Women. Who got up those clubs that made you all fight with each other, so that I hadn't a place to go to

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

for a decent game of bridge? Women. It ought to be a crime for any woman to have children that writes books."

"I don't believe they do, most of them," Susy interpolated vaguely if soothingly. "But there's that German man, Tom, that Aunt Emma went to hear lecture—he wasn't a woman. And he said he never went to school till he was twelve. And now he's a professor at Harvard."

"I'll bet he is," said Mr. Wilbour disgustedly. "If they don't write books they're always professors. That's the idea exactly. Or magazine editors. Do you know," he demanded indignantly, "that that little man with the rough-rider hat that's always trying to tell me how to play my own hand—I pointed him out to you last week—actually gave me a long lecture about taking the kids out every morning and dropping them into the brook? He said it would make hardy citizens of 'em. He tried to get me to promise I would. I thought he had six of his own at least, and I hoped they'd turn out hardier than he is—he's always cursing about his digestion. And what do you think? He's an editor of the *Ladies' Own Monthly*, and never had a child in his life! Writes articles on tatting and how to make a nice apple-pie without any apples, I haven't a doubt!"

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

Susy giggled.

"Perhaps that's why those recipes are so bad," she added contemplatively. "I never could get one to come out fit to eat."

They leaned over a misshapen rail-fence, rain-and-weather washed to a lovely, silvery violet, and watched Martin and Thomas gather dandelions. Martin made a neat bouquet of his, but Thomas followed the more original method of snapping them off at the head and sitting on them firmly, to make sure of them.

"There's a nice little kindergarten in the village," Susy began, after a contented pause. "It must be nice, because Doctor Partridge's little girl goes and the Ballantynes' two children. They drive in three miles for it. The woman sent me a note. It's only from nine to half-past eleven in the morning, and they do hardly anything but play out-of-doors—with a trained teacher, too. They can have broth at ten, if you want them to. They study nature, mostly."

Tom snorted and was only too evidently about to begin a speech, but his wife checked this with a clever flank movement.

"But you have to promise they sha'n't play with those scroll-saw puzzles," she concluded hastily, "for Mrs. Trayner thinks they are far too stimulating for any child under ten. You can

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

have square blocks, if there are only cows and things like that to make with them."

"Can you play hide-and-seek?" Tom inquired respectfully. "That's an awful nervous strain, sometimes."

"Of course. The teacher is to teach them all those games, Tom. And they learn them in the proper order. It makes a great difference, she says."

"For the Lord's sake!"

Tom ceased his efforts to imitate upon a grass-blade the crowing of a cock, and stared at his innocent offspring, who were shamelessly antedating professional instruction by an elaborate and fairly successful imitation of a baseball nine.

"Do you mean that I'm to pay her perfectly good money to teach Binks how to play jack-stones?" he asked resignedly.

"I don't believe she'd let him play jack-stones when he's only six," Susy answered thoughtfully.

"Listen to me, Susan Wilbour," he announced, "I will send the boy there, but on one condition. If they don't take his temperature before he begins to learn squat-tag, I'll sue them!"

It is to be doubted if this ultimatum was conveyed to Mrs. Trayner, but at nine o'clock on the very next Monday the name of Martin Brinkerhoff Wilbour was formally entered upon that lady's books, and the owner of the title left the home-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

circle, as it were, for those broader fields of effort that must, in the natural course of events, continue to be his earthly portion. He was driven thither by Susy, who proposed to usurp the privileges of the coachman-gardener during good weather and to conduct Tom to his not-too-impossibly-early train, to his great delight—and the almost equal pleasure of the coachman-gardener.

Martin sat importantly on the little seat so miraculously adapted to his needs, and Tom directed the course of the steed, whom he had insisted upon rechristening Fido. The extinction of his early title had made no difference whatever to the animal who, as Tom said, by any other name would go as fast, inasmuch as he never altered his gait under any circumstances.

The air was clear and balmy, the roomy old buggy—a sort of doctor's phaeton—glistened with fresh varnish and new harness, its side-lamps winked and gleamed. Martin was attired in an entirely new sailor suit of neat blue-and-white; an impeccable broad hat of creamy straw protected his sleek and accurately parted hair. His finger-nails were quite beyond criticism. The scarf on Susy's new spring hat rivalled the new spring sky; a fluffy white bow beneath her chin pictured the clouds that flecked the blue above her. Tom had doffed his winter derby for a light

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

gray felt affair which became him immensely in the opinion of his household, and altogether it was a decorative trio that met the train that morning.

Susy filled the interval between Tom's departure and the school-hour with judicious counsels, calculated, from the maternal point of view, to set her son firmly on the path to fame and fortune, and Martin, deeply impressed by this plunge into public life, listened amiably and promised largely.

They drew up before the modest little Colonial house, which had all the air of a social function, so numerous were the motors, governess carts, and pony wagons on the neat round sweep of the entrance drive. The young students, accompanied for the most part by nurses, though there were three or four mothers present, were in the act of descending from their various conveyances, and the whole scene was unusually bright and cheerful. Susy smiled at the pretty picture.

Suddenly there was a clatter of hoofs and a reckless rattle of wheels, and a gay red grocer's cart dashed by all the rest and drew up with a flourish before the door. From among the kerosene cans and baskets of assorted green stuffs there leaped a young woman with a fat and serious infant held bundlewise under her arm. In front of all the amazed circle she dashed, fell upon a surprised child, dragged him from the iron step where

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY



he was poised somewhat perilously, and embraced him wildly, crying as she did so:

“Oh, Martin, good-bye, good-bye! It’s the last time! Say good-bye to your own Bell, for you’re not her baby any more!”

Susy turned crimson with humiliation and horror as Bell’s excited sobs rent the air, but worse was to come, for with an effort the nurse lifted her dazed charge to her shoulder, dropped Thomas by her side, and, pressing Martin to her breast, waved her free hand dramatically at the spell-bound spectators.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

“And I had him from the bottle!” she cried, burying her face in his sailor collar.

This was too much for Martin, who raised his voice and wept aloud, clinging to his anguished nurse. But even as Susy lifted her ashamed eyes his wails were drowned in the chorus of weeping that suddenly resounded from all sides, for three of the nurses, overwhelmed by the subtle tragedy, choked violently and hugged their charges, who in turn bellowed sympathetically. Two attendant mothers were obliged to resort to their handkerchiefs, which upset their children completely, and even a fat old coachman drew his sleeve across his eyes as the touching scene developed. Before her blush had faded the corners of Susy’s mouth were quivering dangerously, and in a moment more she was clasping Thomas and weeping with the rest; so that all around that once cheerful driveway arose the sobs and wails of the most marvellously sudden transformation scene the neat Colonial house had ever witnessed.

Mrs. Trayner, appearing on the porch with a beaming smile and a happy, “Good-morning, children! Is not this a bright, beautiful—” stopped short in terrified amazement at the extraordinary sights and sounds before her, and it was some time before she was able to comprehend them—if, indeed, she ever really did this. No one

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

of her patrons cared to risk the responsibility of an explanation, and her expression of ill-concealed surprise and pardonable curiosity lasted long after the last damp, clinging child had been firmly detached and headed for her door and the last hysterical nurse braced into something like self-control.

“Why are they all— What is the matter?” she had demanded nervously from an unmoved mother who with her equally stoical daughter had regarded the whole mad moment with the air of a bored box-holder.

“Because a young woman jumped out of a grocery cart and said that she had had that little boy in the striped sailor suit from the bottle,” this callous parent had replied satirically, and Mrs. Trayner had shaken her head in puzzled deprecation and herded her small scholars into the house.

It could not be denied: the day had begun badly. Long after Susy had forgiven the repentant Bell and driven her home did the morning's cloud hang over Mrs. Trayner's School for Young Children. Two, indeed, of the Young Children failed utterly to recover their spirits and burst into gulping sobs on the slightest provocation, so that they had to be isolated in the dining-room, as their attacks proved infectious to a

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

degree. The rest paid for their emotional debauch by nervous irritability and a tendency to argument, aided, if the truth must be told, by the injudicious comments of the new pupil, who spoke his mind freely, with embarrassing results.

"I think," said Mrs. Trayner alluringly, "that this little boy who has just come to join us at our work and play would like to learn to make one of these pretty chains."

She held up a series of rings of lemon-colored paper strips, looped each into the other, the ends neatly gummed with photographic paste, and dangled it invitingly, but it proved an unfortunate choice of bait.

"I don't think I want to," said Martin politely but with decision.

"What!—not a pretty chain like this?"

"I don't think it's pretty," he explained.

"But all the other little children think so," argued Mrs. Trayner appealingly.

"But I don't," he said firmly.

Several of the children had stopped by now and regarded the two curiously: retreat would have been shameful.

"Then suppose you learn to make some for your mamma," suggested the teacher; "that is what our little boys and girls do."

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"She wouldn't like 'em, either, I don't think," said Martin patiently, but with a clearly flagging interest. "Aren't there any toys here? I have an engine at home."

"So have I!" shrieked a fat boy in a corner, smearing his paste frightfully.



THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"I've got a parlor-car on mine: it tumbles over like this," piped up a little girl with long dark curls, falling abruptly under the table as she spoke, to the great delight of her brother, who furtively stepped on her while pretending to discover her whereabouts.

By dint of equal parts of patience and main strength, order was finally restored, and Martin, after superhuman efforts, was induced to address himself to the lemon-colored chain-work. He proved an apt pupil, and Mrs. Trayner had already begun to erase the black mark that had been steadily growing against him in her estimation before she left his side. In a very few moments he was working as deftly as many an artist in chains of long standing, and with a pat of encouragement the teacher left him and went on to the advanced pupils who were engaged in the construction of rickety paper bird-cages. When next she glanced at the new member his chain was so incredibly long that she was forced to doubt the neatness of its technique, and hastened to him, expecting to find him smeared with paste, and forecasting her fears audibly.

"No, there isn't too much paste on 'em," he assured her affably; "there isn't none at all. I made 'em without."

"But how could you have made them stick

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

together so, Martin dear? Listen, children, while clever little Martin tells us how he made the ends of his strips hold together without using paste," cried Mrs. Trayner trustfully.

"I spit on 'em!" said Binks briefly, indicating by an unspeakable gesture the method he had employed, and in the disgusting fever of emulation which followed the session closed. . . .

Never in all her blameless career had it occurred to Mrs. Trayner to have encountered the equal of her latest acquisition, and the School for Young Children developed undreamed-of tendencies under his moral impact. And yet, as she ruefully assured his anxious mother, Martin was not a bad boy. He had no vicious tendencies; he was truthful, brave, and fairly industrious. His principal fault, though Mrs. Trayner was not quite equal to discussing this phase of his character, was his disconcerting way of "blocking Fröbel's game," in the irreverent language of his father. No sooner did this great educator announce a basic theory of child nature than Binks completely annihilated this theory. His caustic comments chilled the hitherto satisfactory games; his contemptuous criticism of the helpful little contests rendered the participants idiotic in their own eyes; the peculiar school of poetry consecrated to this form of education proved all too bald and unadorned for

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

his riotous fancy, and his reckless, not to say vulgar, emendations shocked the teachers as much as they delighted the children; last, but not least, the constructive art-features of the system found and left him strangely cold. Let those who would raise shrill voices of praise at the evolution of some unequalled complication of red-and-blue shiny paper—the voice of Binks was not among the chorus. Like the person in the poem, he seemed to be whispering, “It’s clever—but is it Art?”

Nevertheless, some unnamed instinct impelled him to the ceaseless production of the ill-fated chains with which he had christened his educational career, and unending yards of blue, red, and yellow stickiness filled the house. It would have been against every kindergarten canon to destroy these monuments of youthful toil and filial devotion, and they soon formed the main decoration of the bedroom floor of his home. The loathsome baubles draped bureau and bed, wall-space and window-frame. They dangled on Susy’s head till she shrieked with nervous terror, they fell into Tom’s bath and twined about his brushes. Thomas ate them in preference to any other form of nourishment, and dried and disconnected segments of them rolled down the stairs and fell out of the windows. It was like some horrible Biblical

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

plague—and so far as Mrs. Trayner knew, Fröbel afforded no antidote. In all that great System there was no way to stop Martin Wilbour from manufacturing paper chains!

It is doubtful if anything short of the intervention of the Federal Government would have freed the house of Wilbour from this incubus had it not been for the opportune arrival of Aunt Emma. No longer a member of the family of her niece and nephew—who were as dear to her as if they had been her own children—she was yet far from the status of any ordinary guest, and her tactful suggestion that the looped horrors should be sent in quantity to the Crippled Children's Home called forth a storm of enthusiastic approval, although Tom's gloomy fear that the crippled children would henceforth be handicapped by imbecility as well dimmed Susy's pleasure for a moment.

Aunt Emma's interest in intellectual systems was as keen as ever, and not many days had passed before she had thoroughly inspected Martin's school and returned characteristically impressed by Mrs. Trayner—who, it must be owned, was quite accustomed to impress everybody but Martin Wilbour. She had found the conduct of the educational institution almost flawless, Susy decided from her report. Almost, but not quite;

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

for Tom had read large print at five, and his father, one gathered, read with expression and marked selective powers from the Scriptures at the age of four. Aunt Emma confessed that in her opinion a little less paper bird-cage and a little more First Reader would seem to hold out more hope for the future. In vain her niece recounted to her the dangers of excessive and premature cerebral stimulation; in vain Tom cited sardonically the case of the book-writing woman and her spanked daughter—Miss Wilbour was firm.

“Is anything the matter with Tom?” she demanded. “Was ever a word spoken about my brother Thomas’s brain? He might make those clay eggs, too—but *he could learn to read!*”

However, Susy obtained her loyal promise not to teach him, for a reading member was as hopelessly banished from Mrs. Trayner’s Young Children as the unwise virgins from the Bridegroom, and there was no other such select establishment in sight. She promised, too, not to impart the terrors of Bluebeard till the proper age for that indispensable classic (eight to nine years), and submitted to a graded list of nursery favorites for home narration, whose only weak point was that Martin refused to listen to the selections judged

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

suitable to his time of life, and listened to the others from Bell, whom no one had thought to warn.

After this almost irreparable error Susy grew a very gorgon of forethought, and chancing upon the waitress arranging some hitherto harmless lettered blocks to form the word "cat," confiscated them all, and included in a moving address nurse, cook, and housemaid, obtaining from them a solemn vow to keep Master Martin from undue cerebral excitation, as far as in them lay, picturing so vividly the shame of his expulsion from his present seat of learning as to draw tears from the cook's eyes.

Mother Goose, that ageless classic of the nursery, was not banned, however, though a distinct reserve was recommended in the matter of those poems dealing with sudden and violent death. This, unfortunately, mutilated the volume appreciably, as the maternal *Goose* resembles all early national bards in a slashing disregard for the finer feelings of a neurasthenic generation, and Aunt Emma complained that it was hard to interest her great-nephew in the expurgated edition. He knew them all by heart, and it sometimes chilled his mother to the marrow to mark the natural manner in which he held the volume, cleverly deducing the rhymes from

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY



the attendant pictures, and declaiming with absolute accuracy for astonishing lengths of time.

His father, on one of these occasions, turned from a spirited rendering of *Simple Simon* to ask abruptly, "Did you notice he says 'ayny' for 'any'? He says, 'Indeed, I haven't ayny.'

He never hears it pronounced like that, does he?"

"Why, no, I suppose not," Susy replied vaguely; "he'll outgrow it, anyway."

"What makes him say that one about 'a dillar, a dollar, a ten-o'clock scholar' so slowly?" Tom pursued.

"Because he's trying to remember it, I suppose. I didn't know he knew that one. They learn so quickly. Aunt Emma must have read that to him."

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"No, I didn't, Susy," said Aunt Emma; "that's in a new rag book, and we haven't gone over it yet."

"It was Bell!" cried Martin hastily. "Bell, she told it to me!"

Tom looked thoughtful, but said no more. On the next Saturday he appeared with a new and gorgeous rag book, filled with animals of every hue, and presented it to his youngest son.

"Binks talk picshures to Thomas—Binks talk book!" the little fellow begged.

"But Binks doesn't know those pictures, darling: that's a new book. Give to mother—mother talk," said Susy.

"Oh, Binks knows all those—Bell has read them all to him in other books," Tom answered carelessly, at which Martin's face brightened, and he seized the book, turned it right side up, and recited, in loud, didactic tones, to the enraptured Thomas:

*"Look at our bon-ny brown cow!
Give us some milk, bos-sy, now.
Do not turn pale
When she swishes her tail,
For she is a gentle old cow!"*

"Don't say 'swyshes,' Martin; it's 'swishes'," said Susy. "What a nice story! How well you know it!"

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"He knows it about as well as you do!" Tom shouted. "Binks, you little rascal, the game is up! Susy, that boy will be President some day, as sure as fate."

"Tom Wilbour, what do you mean? What's the matter?"

Tom snatched the book from his son and tossed it at Susy.

"It's just published to-day!" he cried. "Bell never read it to him because she never saw it—nor anybody else. My dear, that little devil can read as well as—as—as anything!" he concluded lamely but triumphantly.

Confused, convicted, Martin faced them like a mouse at bay. Susy stared accusingly at Aunt Emma.

"And you promised!" she said reproachfully.

"And I kept it," Miss Wilbour replied proudly. "I never had the least idea he could read, Susy!"

"It was Bell, then."

"Indeed it was not, then, Mrs. Wilbour! Again and again I've refused to show him 'dog' and 'cat' with the blocks!" cried Bell indignantly. "But I'll bet I know who did it! So that's why you were off at the barn so much, and me thinking all the time you were with the animals, like your teacher said was so fine for you! Oh, but you're the sly one! I might have known. I always

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

said there was something underhand about Myron Plummer, and now he's taught you to read!"

"He said I'd surprise my ma," Martin ventured tentatively.

"And so you have," Tom said, choking with laughter at Susy's dazed face and Aunt Emma's tragic eyes, "so you have, Binks, and your pa too, though not so much. Cheer up, Toots—it might be worse, you know! He can live it down: many of us have."

"And I took such pains with everybody," poor Susy began. "And then to learn from the *hired man*! Oh, my dear, what a judgment!"

Aunt Emma's tones vibrated with horror. Again Tom choked.

"It's one on us," he admitted cheerfully. "Well, Binks, you're dished, so far as the Young Children are concerned—that's certain! Never mind, my boy. Run up and bring down your Differential Calculus, and then we'll have a page or two from dear old Homer before we go to bed. College opens in the fall, you know!"



III

WHICH DEALS WITH THE EDUCATION OF NATURE



USY'S was a disposition far too honest to attempt to conceal from Mrs. Trayner the black truth of her unhappy son's indefensible excursions into literature; and in accordance with the immitigable rules of that lady's establishment, in comparison with which the regulations of the Medes and Persians faded into indefinite and elastic by-laws, the name of Martin Brinkerhoff Wilbour was, with decent expressions of regret, expunged from the rostrum of the School for Young Children, and his little arts-and-crafts oaken work-table knew him no more. It would be untactful to delve too thoroughly into

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

the depths of this regret: the proprieties were fully observed, and on the first day of his absence the central chandelier was touchingly draped with paper chains of the missing student's own manufacture. But to deny that the teaching force of the School for Young Children drew its first easy breath for several weeks would be to suppress the mere truth, and no one could have failed to observe that the exercise of the day glided to a neat and decorous finish as they had not done since one no longer there first disturbed their even tenor.

Susy, who had accepted in their entirety the rulings of the institution and had been secretly more moved by the dictum of the Upsons' book-writing friend than she had admitted to her husband, was sincerely shocked at her son's disingenuous methods of mental development, and refused to condone his offence or listen to any further exhibition of his powers. She even exacted from him a solemn promise not to impart his ill-gotten learning to his innocent brother, and looked thoroughly pained when Aunt Emma betrayed her own irrepressible satisfaction in her nephew's achievements. 🍷

"But it didn't hurt Tom!" the good lady reiterated with puzzled emphasis. "I can't see, Susy, why you feel so badly about it. Anybody would think the poor child had committed a crime!"

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"Things are different now, Aunt Emma," the young matron assured her with an evident sense of restraint.

"Ye-es," Aunt Emma admitted unconvinced, "but if anything, I should think they'd have to begin earlier—there's so much more to learn. And especially boys," she added decidedly—"automobiles and air-ships and wireless telegraphy, and all that, you know. And yet there are all the old things, too. Martin will have to learn all that Tom did, and more besides—goodness knows how much more, if Mr. Edison keeps on inventing all the time!"

"You think so, Aunt Emma, but that's just where you're wrong!" cried her niece triumphantly. "That's just the point. Binks *won't* have to learn what Tom did. A lot of that silly stuff was only a waste of time, and the most advanced schools don't teach it now. Look at the way I cried over that nasty old Compound Interest at Miss Crammer's—and what earthly good did it ever do me or any of the girls? And geography is so different now."

"Different?" queried Aunt Emma. "You mean they've discovered more in that empty part of Africa—things like that?"

"No, no," said Susy impatiently, "I mean the way they teach it. I was lunching with Minnie

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

Sears yesterday, and she was telling me about Dorothy's geography: You know they don't bound things any more and they don't use a book much, anyway."

"What do they use?" Aunt Emma asked in bewilderment.

"Why, they take them for walks, and then they see about hills and valleys, and then the lake in Central Park, you know, and after it rains there are little rivers that flow through the mud—you can do it with the end of your umbrella," Susy explained, evidently quoting vigorously.

"But I can't see how taking them to walk in the Park is going to teach them where—where Costa Rica is, and the Amazon, and—and all such places, Susy," Aunt Emma argued plaintively.

"Minnie says that Dorothy's teacher says that a person can live a happy, cultured life without knowing the whereabouts of many places once considered necessary," Susy returned glibly, "and I believe Costa Rica is one of them, Aunt Emma! When I remember the awful times I went through, bounding those foolish countries in South America, it makes my head ache now!"

Aunt Emma said nothing, but appeared unconvinced, and Susy went on, with the absorption in her subject that always marked a new idea with her:

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"Then history, Aunt Emma. They have such a nice idea about teaching it: at that luncheon of Minnie's there was a cousin of hers that lives in Concord, and she was telling how her children learn history. The teacher just takes them out to walk, and they visit all the historical places, and then they go by trolley to Lexington, and see the very spots where it all happened. And they go in and study about Bunker Hill right on the spot."

"Um!" said Aunt Emma doubtfully. "That may be all very well for Concord, Susy, because a great deal of history happened there. But I don't know what the children would have done in Taylorsville, Illinois. Uncle James Taylor founded that town himself, and there wasn't much history going on there except what Uncle James and the other men made—and they were in business mostly," she added thoughtfully.

A loud burst of laughter from the hall greeted this contribution to contemporary pedagogies, and Tom hurried in and clapped his aunt heartily on the back.

"There's where you win hands down, Aunt Em!" he cried joyously. "Go on, both of you! I'll be referee and bottle-holder and—"

"I don't know what you mean by bottle-holder," his wife interrupted with dignity. "You could never begin to hold six, like those wire ones that

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

Bell had for Thomas!—And I think it's perfectly horrid of you to listen out there when I'm talking! It makes me feel so silly. And it's nothing I invented, anyway, Tom Wilbour, and I don't feel at all like kissing you when you are laughing at me. If you could hear what some other mothers think about what their children ought not to know, you'd find that I was very moderate—ve-ry mod-e-rate in-deed!" Susy declaimed breathlessly.

"Well, you're not moderately good-looking, anyway," her husband replied, with a calm conviction that dismissed all suspicion of a purposely tactful answer; "is she, Aunt Em? You look about eighteen—I'm so glad you don't get *white* with anger, Toots, like people in books!—What do the other mothers think?"

Relenting a little—as who would not?—Mrs. Wilbour sat upon the arm of his wicker porch-chair (they were trying to believe that summer had come) and continued earnestly:

"Well, that woman—what *is* her name, Aunt Emma? I read you a beautiful story of hers in one of the new magazines this month: that one about the child that didn't die, finally—that woman, Tom, that said she'd spank her little girl, you remember—"

"For Heaven's sake, are we to have another dose of that woman?" Tom sighed and stretched

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

his legs enduringly. "Well, get it over. What's her trouble, now? Child learned to come in when it rains, by mistake?"

"Not at all," his wife replied with dignity. "That little girl is eight years old, and has never been inside a school nor had a governess. All she is learning is riding and swimming. She is leaping bars now and diving. Her mother is going to keep her back as long as possible."

"Well, I wish her luck," said Tom briefly. "It's a pity the kid didn't take after its mother: if it had turned out as dippy as *she* is, there wouldn't be any difficulty in keeping it back—the trouble would be to keep it out of the asylum!"

"I think that is simply wicked, Susy," Aunt Emma added decidedly. "The child won't thank her for such treatment later, let me tell you! She should send it to school immediately."

"Ah, indeed!" cried Susy. "And supposing she did, Aunt Emma? What do you think it would learn there? There was a friend of that cousin of Minnie's that lives in Concord at the luncheon, and she told us what her boy was studying. What do you think it was?"

"What?" Aunt Emma asked breathlessly, for it was characteristic of the good woman that her interest in each new theory of life was as un-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

quenchable as if she had never disgustedly abandoned each in turn.

"And a very expensive school, too," Susy added impressively, "and most select. Only the very best Boston families."

She faced them defiantly, for Tom and Aunt Emma were both against her now, and checked each subject off on a pointing, rosy finger.

"Bee-keeping; etching on copper; fancy dancing, and Greek history!" she enumerated solemnly, and their awe-struck countenances assured her she had not lunched with Minne Sears in vain.

"By Godfrey!" Tom muttered, shaking his head—"by Godfrey, Toots!"

Aunt Emma arose, and shook out her skirts thoroughly—her method of exhibiting utter resignation.

"Well, Susy," she said, "of course it is no affair of mine, but if that is the idea nowadays, I must say I agree with Mrs. Trayner that Martin would develop quite as well for another year with Nature and the animals!"

To Nature and the animals, accordingly, Martin was consigned; and as no one ever caught Nature in the act of administering any specific instructions, so to speak, it was impossible to quarrel with the first of these great teachers.

But it is only just to Mrs. Trayner to conclude

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

that she had never employed many animals upon her own Faculty; nor, indeed, associated to any great extent with those humbler brothers of the human race. In this easy disposal of responsibility, however, the lady does not stand alone, for one famous professor of ethics has summarily sent more than one sluggard to an insect proved by modern scientists and philosophers only too little capable of affording a valuable example to any practical person; and if Solomon mistook his data, how shall Mrs. Trayner be blamed for inaccuracy?

It might be urged, moreover, that the stock of animals in the Wilbour's possession failed to represent the brute creation adequately. But for this the young people were hardly responsible, as, with the exception of Fido the horse, all were gifts. Tom's senior partner, on learning of the contemplated country exodus, had enthusiastically presented his colleague with a pair of spotty black-and-white hounds, of the genus known in the country as "carriage dogs." Naturally, Tom had accepted them thankfully, though he had planned for an Irish terrier, and Susy had set her heart upon a Russian wolf-hound. Two dogs, however, were considered sufficient, particularly as in recommending these two to the family's affections the senior partner had impressed upon

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

Tom the fact that they were none too friendly to other dogs, and apt to be jealous, even, of visiting pets. Their names were "Happy" and "Dapple," but these were soon modified by their new master to "Lappy" and "Drabble," which better described their habits of respectively crawling into every known variety of filth and leaping onto the knees of every one, notwithstanding a weight of fifty-odd pounds.

Martin, like every healthy boy of six, pined for a goat and cart, and it had been one of Susy's cherished plans to buy him one as soon as they should get into the country. It was with the most unaffected pleasure, therefore, that she learned of the expressed intention of her son's godmother to present him with one. She, herself, had looked no higher than the ordinary short-haired goat of commerce, and was much impressed when an enormous shaggy creature, dripping with cream-colored, curly locks that trailed to the ground, and horned elaborately, appeared before their humble gate, accompanied by a fresh and brilliantly scarlet equipage, at sight of which Martin had screamed for joy.

Around the goat's neck was a label which read, "I come to darling Binks, from Godmother, with hopes for a happy future together." But after an attempt to detach this label had nearly cost Tom

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

an eye, and when an equally ill-advised essay on Myron Plummer's part to hitch the beast to its cart rendered their hired man's right arm useless for a week, Tom decided that the future referred to must have been a heavenly one, though if the goat's share in this was at all assured, Mr. Wilbour was convinced that all he had learned in youth about the place was entirely erroneous.

The animal's name was Mildred, and as it was perfectly aware of this, and was a goat of great determination and fixity of character, it was useless to change it to any one of the many more suitable titles that readily occurred to the Wilbours. Mildred turned out to have been purchased second-hand, at a great reduction, by Martin's godmother, who, with an unfortunate lack of practicality, had neglected to inquire the reasons for such cheapness—not that she would have been cheap at any price in Myron Plummer's possibly prejudiced opinion, to whose enlightened mind no reasons were required. Any further attempt to hitch her to her cart would be, obviously, as reckless as futile, and she roamed the orchard, remarkable only for her superfluity of hair and ungovernable disposition. Nevertheless, Susy regarded the purchase of another and more amenable of her class as the wildest extravagance, and

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY



poor Martin was wont to regard her wistfully from afar, vainly endeavoring to propitiate her with offerings of carrots and sugar, which he was obliged to deposit on a certain rock of the wily animal's own selection, previous to a hasty escape from the wrath to come, for she detested children, and was perfectly frank about it.

Aunt Emma herself was responsible for the next pet. She had observed a small and dispirited donkey dragging stones from an old wall in what had once been, evidently, a handsome little two-wheeled cart; and heartbroken at the cruel treatment of the little beast, who was beaten steadily by the half-grown boy in charge

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

of it, she had complained of this to the boy's father. This gentleman, a foxy-faced teamster in dirty corduroys, agreed with her heartily as to the severity of his son's methods, but explained them (with a sly glance at Martin, who was with her) by the fact that the beast was really a child's pet and not at all a working animal, but that having purchased it for this purpose and been cruelly deceived, he felt himself too poor to forego the services of the donkey, and was compelled, much against his will, to witness this degradation of a fine, well-broken, gentle play-mate for some fortunate son of a wealthier parent than he.

"Gentle?" Aunt Emma repeated hopefully, with visions of the unspeakable Mildred.

The teamster's son was promptly dispatched for a carrot and a bit of bread, and the enraptured Martin fed these to the undoubtedly well-disposed little creature. A moment later he was sitting on its back in triumph, and its easy pace and deliberate rate of progress were perfectly convincing, even to a maiden aunt.

"A lick o' paint on that cart, ma'am, a bolt here and there, and new cushions, and the President's sons might be proud to sit in it!" observed the owner of the cart dispassionately.

"But—but the expense of its food," Aunt

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

Emma urged. "I should not feel justified in charging any one with that, even with a gift."

"It's plain you ain't used to a jackass, ma'am," replied the teamster pityingly; "the windy side of a barn is what the saying is—for them, ma'am. No one don't ever expect to lay out a penny on a jackass. I assure you of that."

It was quite evident that he practised what he preached, for the poor little creature's ribs were clearly defined, and its hungry nosing of Martin's fingers showed the unaccustomed nature of its little luncheon.

When Aunt Emma found that twenty dollars would purchase both donkey and cart, she struck the bargain instantly, and both purchases appeared before the surprised heads of the house in short order.

Susy was much pleased, and a week, during which time Cousin Albert (for Tom had insisted on christening the new pet on the strength of an undoubted resemblance in expression) gained a little in weight, saw him obediently dragging a new painted cart around the driveway. To be sure, the bill for painting, varnishing, repairing, adding reins, whips, and cushions, was of a nature to be carefully concealed from Aunt Emma; but, as Tom said, a pet that neither leaped at your throat nor sought to impale you on its horns

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

was worth something, and Cousin Albert was far from these or any other ferocious courses. Indeed, so meek was he that Susy, after seeing him fall between the shafts, apparently from over-exertion, after a dozen circuits of the driveway, sternly forbade his further use till he had got a little stronger and outgrew the teamster's ill usage, and he was fed almost constantly by the eager children and the kindly servants. When not thus engaged he was absorbedly cropping grass, and Martin, who, with the connivance of Myron Plummer, stole several furtive rides upon his daily-broadening back, observed a growing tendency to restlessness in Cousin Albert, coupled with a contrary tendency to stand perfectly still for minutes together, discouraging in the extreme to a young rider. While things were in this state a week's heavy rain kept everybody away from him, and on the heels of this a widespread epidemic of measles frightened Susy into sending Bell with both the children to her sister for three weeks, taking this occasion, herself, for many long-promised little visits to old friends. Aunt Emma took care of the house, and Tom, who had begun to be a little overworked, spent most of his free hours at his club, running out wherever Susy might be for little holidays now and then.

Nothing could have been more to Cousin

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

Albert's fancy, and he ate steadily for twenty hours out of the twenty-four, assisted enthusiastically by Aunt Emma, who marked with delight his sleek and rounding sides and stoked him like a furnace. She wrote delightful letters about him to Martin, who skipped with joy and ordered him to meet himself and his brother at the station and convey them home.

But only Myron Plummer met them, driving the faithful Fido. As he descended and handed the reins to Susy, who was to drive the children, leaving Bell to walk the scant mile from the station with the friendly hired man, Martin inquired somewhat sulkily why Cousin Albert had not complied with his request. The result was disconcerting, for Myron Plummer burst into a loud guffaw that startled every living thing within hearing, and slapped his leg with such force as to nearly throw himself over.

"Cousin Albert!" he bellowed with rich enjoyment — "Cousin Albert! Oh yes! I guess so!"

"What do you mean, Myron? What is the matter with the donkey?" Susy inquired with dignity, while the children held their breaths with anxiety.

"Matter?" cried Myron Plummer. "Why, Mis' Wilbour, that durn little jackass has et him-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

self so near the bustin'-point that you couldn't no more get him inter them shafts than you could 'n' el'phant. No, nor never will, if you ask me. He's a reg'lar butterball! And frisky? My Lord! you can't get near him to touch him, let alone harness him. Martin better watch out for his heels, I tell you! He's a terror, he is—Cousin Albert! Yes, I guess so!"

They left him shouting with his rural mirth, and a little later regarded the subject of his outburst—wistfully, but not too near. For Cousin Albert had waxed fat and kicked, like his Scriptural predecessors; and though his extra food was strictly cut off, there was no way of keeping him from the grass but muzzling, and as no one could be found who would volunteer to do this, he swaggered about the pasture lot, sleek and scornful, so utterly at variance with his narrow little shafts that Tom professed to believe he had never fitted them, and had been artificially reduced in order to make their use possible.

To Mrs. Trayner, who, on the occasion of her school's closing, was making a semi-professional call on Susy, Cousin Albert appeared picturesque to a degree, and she declared herself quite captivated by his gentle gambols, and begged permission to escort the School for Young Children to the pasture, in a body, the following autumn,

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

enlarging upon the conviction that nothing—even her own justly famous method—could ever approach in educative value the reverent and minute study of the domestic animals.

“In many ways,” she added magnanimously, “your dear little Martin, left, as you *have* left him so wisely, to the simplest, greatest influences of all, will learn much that we never could have taught him, had he stayed—”

She was interrupted by a terrible braying, a wild “hee-haw! *hee-haw!* hee-haw!” that shocked every sense, closely followed by an astonishingly accurate imitation of the cry of an angry goat. A frightful clatter, an indescribable stampede that threw furniture and tea-cups to the veranda floor, alternated with a series of mysterious thuds, drove the blood from Mrs. Trayner’s cheek and alarmed even Susy for a moment.

“The animals are on the porch!” cried the unnerved guest, “but, thank Heaven, Mr. Wilbour is coming up the path—he can face them! Oh, what is the matter with him?”

For Tom had stopped abruptly and stood staring in the direction of the house, evidently a prey to mixed emotions. With a short, angry exclamation, Susy thrust open the French window and stood upon the porch. About the floor an

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

animated fur rug appeared to be running amuck; four stubby tan shoes supported it and confused her, until she observed that sleeves were thrust into two of these. A pair of flopping brown ears, strangely familiar, but connected in her mind



with an old rocking-horse, waved at the forefront of this creature; its horrid brays afflicted the ear.

Staggering along behind it appeared a smaller creature, neatly fitted into an Angora baby-wagon blanket. Soiled white stockings were drawn over the four legs of this beast, which ex-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

hibited a tendency to lose its balance and roll from time to time, though never stopping for a moment its metallic and yet life-like bleating. At regular intervals the two collided furiously, and at such times the fur-rug beast would thud terribly with its hind legs, perilously escaping the head of the smaller combatant, to whom it yelled breathlessly:

“Butt me! Butt me with your horns! Butt harder, or I’ll kick you! *Hee-haw! Hee-haw!*”

To which the smaller beast replied with a wild “Ma-a-a-a! Ma-a-a-a!” and a head-on crash at anything in sight, so that the wicker furniture flew about until the porch resembled the reports of a successful spiritualistic séance and the windows rattled in their frames.

Even as the horrified women advanced to them, the smaller animal staggered toward the unguarded guest and butted furiously at her knees; she sank down with a shriek and an utterly unintentional blow at the larger creature, who responded with a bray of rage and an only too well aimed and naturalistic kick. Susy, in a dash for rescue, seized the Angora beast by a misleading white stocking, thus bumping its nose badly; it bit angrily at her ankle, and her agonized cry brought Tom charging into the group, by now almost inextricably entangled.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

A few horrid seconds, and the worst was over. Mrs. Trayner was established in a righted arm-chair, flushed and palpitating, one hand unconsciously holding in a grip of iron a brown rocking-horse ear. Susy fled for tea and smelling-salts, leaving her sons, crimson with heat and temper, entirely at their father's mercy. And history compels the statement that whatever may have been Mrs. Trayner's professional attitude toward corporal punishment, she, or some one wonderfully like her in appearance, held Thomas Franklin Wilbour in a rigid embrace until such time as his father should have finished giving his brother the most memorable spanking of his life and felt himself free to begin on his youngest.

It would have ill become such a well-known friend of infancy to bear malice, and Mrs. Trayner assured the deprecating parents that she bore none; but they could not but observe that she declined, firmly though politely, Susy's visit of apology, promised on the not-yet-presentable brothers' behalf.

Poor Susy felt very badly about it all, though Tom's wrath had been dissipated by the spanking, and he was able to laugh at it that evening. But their situations were quite reversed on the occasion of his senior partner's visit.

Mr. Hartwell was a somewhat fat and fussy

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

gentleman, a confirmed city-dweller, whose idea of the country is best described by the picture of a wheeled chair on a board-walk. But he had grown quite attached to his clever young junior, was genuinely interested in the two spotty dogs, which he seriously believed to be very valuable, and anxious to gratify his childless wife with a day of children's society. The visit opened admirably: a perfect June day had brought out Susy's peonies and early roses; the children were quietly napping through an unexceptionable lunch—a glut of new peas and strawberries and tender lamb chops; there was neither mud nor dust, either of which would have ruined Mrs. Hartwell's day, for she was a nervous, immaculate little creature, a fanatic housekeeper, and hopelessly in thrall to germs and imaginary infections of every sort—in short, the Wilbour household was at its best.

Susy had privately wondered, ever since the advent of Drabble and Lappy, how Mrs. Hartwell could have tolerated them for a moment, until Tom enlightened her with the information that the dogs had boarded in a very expensive stable in the city, and been subjected to unheard-of disinfectings and bathings before they were permitted even to accompany Mr. Hartwell in his morning constitutional through the Park.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

That gentleman, serenely enjoying his coffee, spoke for the second time of his one-time pets.

"And where are Happy and Dapple, Wilbour?" he inquired genially. "Dapple, particularly, was my favorite, though Mrs. Hartwell, I believe, always slightly preferred Happy."

Susy glanced apprehensively at the snowy lengths of solid embroidery and lace that clothed her visitor.

"The dogs are not quite dry—I have just had them washed," she replied, a little uneasily. "Drab—Dapple gets into rather messy places, sometimes, and Lap—Happy springs up on one, now and then. Haven't you ever noticed it?"

"He never sprang up on me," Mrs. Hartwell announced firmly, with such decision that Susy determined that the lady's husband should interview his favorites alone.

"To tell the truth," said Mrs. Hartwell, "I am much more interested, myself, in your dear children. Are we not to see them before we go?"

"Yes, indeed," returned the mother proudly, with a contented consciousness of the little white embroidered sailor suits, white stockings, and new russet slippers that lay decorously at the foot of Bell's bed.

"Bell, are the children awake yet?"

"Y-yes, Mrs. Wilbour, they're awake, but I don't seem to find them, somehow," Bell an-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

swered guardedly. "Martin said something about getting his bones, and never came back from the bath-room. And now Thomas has gone, too."

"Getting his bones? How amusing children are!" Mrs. Hartwell exclaimed. "I suppose they say things like that twenty times a day, and you don't know what they mean."

"Yes—no—I suppose so," Susy responded vaguely. Where could they be?

Even as she spoke a sudden, frightful odor floated into the dainty drawing-room, particularly fresh and sweet to-day in recognition of Mrs. Hartwell's known standards. This odor was not entirely novel; rather did it appear to be compounded of many vaguely familiar but always shunned ingredients, unconnected, however, with drawing-rooms. Mrs. Hartwell sniffed audibly; Susy endeavored not to. Then a succession of stifled giggles was heard, the door moved slowly, and the unspeakable odor became suddenly more pronounced. At this point Susy should have leaped forward, closed the door, and called loudly upon Bell, and no one was quicker to acknowledge this, afterward, than she. But we have all our weak moments, our Waterloos, and this was undeniably poor Susy's. She sat fascinated, it seemed, upon her neat Chippendale chair; her lips moved, Tom assured her later, but no sound

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

issued from them. Tom, who had an unfortunate summer cold, smelled nothing, and merely smiled with paternal tolerance at the childish giggles.

Now a snarling yap, more giggles, a quick scuffle, and the door flew fully open. Two frightful little objects, reeking with filth unmentionable, scrambled on hands and knees into the room. They were clad in diminutive pajamas, whose original tint was absolutely unguessable, so stained and dripping with every sort of refuse were they. Between the teeth of each was held a too evidently buried bone of enormous dimensions, and as they shuffled along they barked and growled with wonderful realism.



THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

Self-preservation is ever nature's first law, and each member of that party shrank fearfully aside, for a dazed moment, as the horrid, crawling objects neared them. And in that moment the smaller object raised itself, with a whiff of drains and stables, and chuckled,

"Hello, man! I'm Drabble. Man want Drabble's bone?" and threw its vile bone with terrible accuracy straight onto Mr. Hartwell's fresh, light-gray summer suit.

Tom rushed for it, but paused a fatal second, enough for the other unmentionable creature to rise, barking, and, with an ecstatic shriek,

"I'm Lappy! Love me! *Love* me!" to hurl itself upon the shrinking embroidery of Mrs. Hartwell.

In kindness to the Wilbours the chronicler can only, in the language of the early novelists, draw a veil over what followed. Tom, with a hasty glance at the tongs, abandoned the idea and detached his loathsome children bravely with his hands.

Susy, at Mrs. Hartwell's faint request, disrobed her where she sat, and escorted her tremblingly to the bath-room, where she used a bottle of Listerine and half a tin of borax. The children were partially cleaned in the stable, and, at Mrs. Hartwell's hysterical request, sprayed there with

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

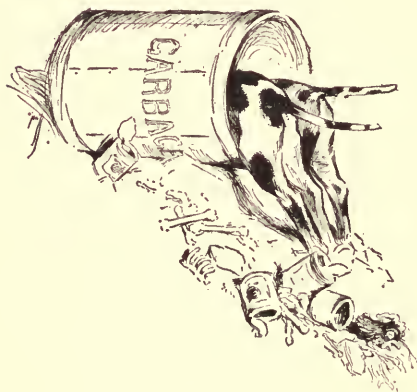
carbolic. Everything was done that could be done, but their guests evidently felt, with Lady Macbeth, that it would take more than the perfumes of Araby to mitigate the occasion, and it required all Susy's persuasive powers to avoid a solemn promise to bury the white embroidered dress.

When they were fairly on their home train poor Susy's overstrained nerves relaxed, and she burst into wild laughter, joined, in spite of himself, at least, by her exasperated husband.

"Oh, *do* you think she still regrets that she has no little ones?" Susy moaned.

Tom chuckled wrathfully.

"Probably not," he said; "but look here, all



the same, Toots —this can't go any further. If this is all Nature is going to teach Binks, then he'd better quit and get into a state of grace mighty quick! This is awful."

"I know, Tom.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

Of course, I'm sure we'll do anything you say," she agreed meekly, wiping her eyes; "but they're waiting in the stable, you know. What are you going to do?"

And two perplexed parents stared at Fido.



IV

WHICH DEALS WITH A TIMELY PROBLEM

“**T**OOTTS,” Mr. Thomas Wilbour began abruptly, helping himself to an enormous spoonful of orange marmalade, and spreading it over a bit of heavily buttered toast with the leisurely accuracy possible only to holiday breakfasts, “have you noticed anything out of the way lately with Aunt Em?”

“With Aunt Em?” Susy repeated absent-mindedly, dragging her youngest son dexterously out from the coils of the electric table-bell, which he rang furiously with every motion of his entangled feet (a disturbance which would have softened the brain of any ordinary waitress, but

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

to which the Wilbours' servants were thoroughly accustomed). "Why, I don't think so, Tom. She seemed very well to me.—Martin, please don't kick your chair so much, and you know very well that those crusts will be saved for your dinner, so you might as well eat them now!"



"I'll never eat none of them," said Martin quietly, but very, very firmly. "I'll never eat nothing, if it has to be them. Thomas, I'll kick your head if you smell my boots again."

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

Susy drew a long, resigned breath. This was to be one of Martin's "days."

"There's no use arguing with him, Tom," she interposed hastily, as her husband gulped his marmalade down with a portentous expression; "when he gets to a certain point he knows what he'll have to do, and he doesn't like it at all. So he'd better be careful."

Martin made no reply whatever, but ostentatiously cleaned bits of bread down to their crusts and piled these latter in the shape of a log-cabin by his plate.

"Binks no eat cushts, naughty Binks go stwaighttobed," Thomas murmured tactfully, edging with good generalship out of his brother's way, but slightly miscalculating the reach of that avenger's arm, so that a neat nip in the fleshy part of his back elicited agonized squeaks from the injudicious commentator and destroyed for the moment the serenity of the morning meal.

It was the Fourth of July, and in honor of the day Myron Plummer had early suspended the emblem of his country from the neat white flag-pole that had for a week past adorned the side-yards. This pole was masked for several feet of its otherwise bare and undecorative surface by a fortunate clump of syringas, an arrangement somewhat ungratefully insisted upon by Mr. Wil-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

bour before he would consent to accept the flagpole, which was a recent gift from his aunt, and made him feel, as he somewhat enigmatically described it, like a German dentist, anyway, but less so when the syringas partly covered the thing. Pressed for an explanation, he had admitted that a German dentist who had lived near him in boyhood had owned and frequently used a flagpole, and that he objected to the resemblance, but as the position was somewhat untenable, he had finally admitted its inherent weakness, and had even, at Aunt Emma's insistence, purchased a flag of proportionate size to attach to her gift.

"After all," Aunt Emma had urged, "the children *are* Americans, and as the public schools are the only place where patriotism is taught, and they aren't to go to them, they ought to learn it at home. And the first step is a flag."

So, as has been said, the banner of his country floated like a mammoth peppermint-stick in the breeze when Martin and his brother sallied forth to take the air after the somewhat tempestuous scene which closed his breakfast and threatened at one moment to banish his modest bundle of fire-crackers from the programme of the day. To any collection of adults unaccustomed to the constant presence of a pair of youths of six and two years respectively, the scene of the breakfast,

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

whose harrowing details have been, in the interests of domesticity, repressed, would undoubtedly have spelled nervous headache and an acute attack of pessimism at the very least; but to the Wilbours it was but as the merest ripple on the surface of family life, and passed as such, with little comment.

Tom took another cup of coffee on the strength of the interruption, and resumed his previous topic with the ease which only long practice in this art could have given him.

"About Aunt Em," he began—"is it only my idea, or isn't she just a little—er—well, just a little . . ."

"Why, what *do* you mean, Tom?" Susy was honestly quite ignorant of whatever fine shades of meaning her husband had intended to convey, and he was forced to speak more plainly.

"I can't exactly think of the word I want," he began again; but at this simple statement Susy gasped irrepressibly:

"Goodness! If you can't think of it, Tommy, who in the world can?"

Passing by this apparent tribute to his mental powers with an airy wave of the hand, Mr. Wilbour continued:

"Maybe it's only me she favors, but I give you my word, Toots, I haven't opened my mouth for

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

the last week that I haven't been—been, well, been sat on, you know!"

Susy scowled thoughtfully.

"Do you mean to say you haven't noticed it?" he demanded.

"Why, now that you speak of it, I remember that you *have* been rather argument—"

"Arguments!" Tom interrupted. "I believe you! Heavens above, how can I help it, when she talks such nonsense? Am I or am I not supposed to know whether or not a married woman can control her property in this State?"

"Oh, well, what does it matter?" said his wife philosophically. "I don't know how on earth we got into the subject, anyhow."

"That's it—that's just it!" Tom leaned toward her dramatically, rolling his after-breakfast cigarette with the air of a conspirator. "Don't you observe that we're always getting into those subjects? Three or four days ago, what were we scrapping over? Oh, I know—child labor. I got it, hot and heavy, just because I said—and very properly—that there were two sides to that question, and that a great many ignorant people were going to get themselves into a fine box if they went around ventilating their half-baked ideas about it without realizing what they were getting at in the end with their crazy, 'sweeping reforms.'"

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

“Well, I know; but why will you talk about those sort of things, Tom?” And Susy glanced out of the window and jumped nervously as the first explosive bang assured the neighborhood that the Independence of America was forever memorialized in one faithful patriot’s heart.

“I talk about them?—I?” Tom swelled with disgust. “What should I talk about ’em for? I tell you it’s Aunt Em. Toots, she’s got something up her sleeve! She’s at it again—you mark my words. That’s why she’s always roping me into some—”

Bang! Bang!! Bang!!!

A frantic wail from Thomas and abnormal silence on his brother’s part struck terror to their hearts, and they raced out to the flagpole to meet, after all, a reassuring tranquillity, as the bangs turned out to have been merely three unusually successful celebrations of the day, and Thomas’s wail nothing more than his ingenuous protests against the fate that confined him to paper torpedoes, which but feebly expressed, it would seem, the patriotic emotions that stirred his youthful breast.

They sat down comfortably under the syringas, and Tom, after a few reminiscent whiffs of the burning powder, yielded, like the war-horse, to its seductions, and touched off a few of the fire-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

crackers, to the great delight of his heirs. Aunt Emma, who scorned late breakfasts, having taken that meal, as she succinctly put it, for considerably over half a century at half-past seven, now joined them, crackling in a speckled black-and-white morning dress, and commented favorably on the effect of the flag and its undoubted educative results.

"And though I understand, of course, Susy, your objections to those rough boys in the public school, and the horrid things Martin would undoubtedly learn there, still I must say that the system is most excellent, and it is so beautiful to see them all stand up and do that about my God, my Home, and my Flag!"

"What do they do when they stand up?" Tom inquired lazily, jerking his youngest back suddenly from a too-intimately conducted analysis of that species of pyrotechnic known as a "sisser," an effect which the chief operator produces by the simple process of bending a fire-cracker in the middle and applying a light to the exposed and bursting powder, with the pleasing result and almost as pleasing uncertainty as to where the object will jump, which might be expected from the method employed.

"Why, they all rise," Aunt Emma explained, herself suiting the action to the word, "and point upward—like this—when they say 'my God';

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

then, then—well, really now, I can't remember where they *do* point for 'my Home'; they can't all point in different directions very well, now, can they? It wouldn't be orderly—"

"And then people move so often, too," Susy added absent-mindedly.

Tom gazed with interest at Aunt Emma's suspended gestures, and suggested:

"Perhaps they put their hands on their hearts—you know 'home is where the heart is'!"

"Well, anyway," Miss Wilbour resumed, "when it's 'my Flag' they kiss their hands all together to the flag over Washington's picture, and it really brings tears to your eyes, Tom, to see all those little Jewish and Irish and Italian children so patriotic!"

"Um," said her nephew thoughtfully, "I don't doubt it would have brought tears to Washington's, Aunt Emma. But if you approve of it so highly, why not teach it to the kiddies? At least, they'd know where to point for 'my Home,' wouldn't you, boys?"

"That's a very good idea, Tom and Susy," Aunt Emma cried enthusiastically, "and it would make a nice little ceremony for the day, too. Now, just come over here for a moment, Thomas, dear, and stand by Martin, so; stand up straight and hold your heads up—"

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"I have to tie m' shoe," Martin grumbled suspiciously; "let Thomas do it."

"Now, Binks, dear, don't be disagreeable," Susy interposed, "and don't begin to make objections before you know what it is Aunt Emma wants you to do, even."

"I don't care what it is—I don't want to do it," said Binks flatly; "I'm too big to kiss my hand. I'm six and a half."

"Stand up here, sir," Tom commanded shortly, and Martin hurriedly assumed a lop-sided and unconvincing pose next his brother, who braced himself for the coming ordeal by stepping firmly upon one foot with the other, thus throwing himself forcibly upon the ground and requiring to be untwisted before he could arise with any degree of success.

"Now," said Aunt Emma, "we all say 'my God' together—"

"Mother won't let me," Martin interrupted doggedly.

"Won't let you? What do you mean, dear?" Susy asked anxiously, her maternal imagination requiring no aid in prophesying a strained and unfortunate morning if things took no turn for the better.

"That new Mary that cooks the things in the kitchen says 'my God' all the time, and when I

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

said, 'My God, Thomas, you've lost your rubber,' you said if I said it again you'd speak to my father, and so I can't," he explained in injured tones.

Tom turned his head, after the simple formula in vogue among adults when they wish to conceal inconvenient emotions from eyes sharper than the average squirrel's, but Susy was too involved in explanation to find time for mirth, and hastened valiantly into the awkward discussion.

"No, no, dear, you don't understand. You mustn't say it about Thomas's rubber, but this is different. This is a—a sort of a little speech—an address—"

"Whose dress?"

"Oh, dear! Aunt Emma, if you want the children to say it, I really think you might explain it!"

"You are looking up into heaven, Martin—and Thomas," Aunt Emma began, "and so it is perfectly proper to say 'my God.' It's not at all the way Mary says it. I'm sure you know why."

"Yes," Martin interrupted eagerly, with the first evidence of interest he had yet shown, "I do, Aunt Emma."

"I thought so, dear," said she, with an irresistible glance of triumph at the child's parents—

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

that concentrated essence of inquiry, peculiar to the unmarried, as to why Providence has seen fit to implant in their breasts alone that exclusive comprehension of infancy so often displayed by them. "Tell me why it is different."

"Because," Binks returned importantly, assuming a Daniel Webster attitude, "you say 'my Godd,' and Mary says 'my Gawd'!"

Again Tom turned his head, and this time Susy sided openly with him, and Aunt Emma looked the pain and disillusionment reserved for those who grapple with the youthful mind.

"Well, at any rate, if we don't get at it, it will never be done," she recovered herself briskly, "and so don't let us argue any more, children, but do it, if we're going to."

"I will if mother will," Martin bargained shamelessly, noting his mother's relaxed air and sure of his ground.

"Of course I will," Susy returned promptly, "we all will—father, too. Come on, Tom—get up!"

Somewhat unwillingly, but alive to the responsibilities of his example, Mr. Wilbour arose languidly and lined up with the other four on the edge of the little slope behind the flag-staff.

"Now," Aunt Emma began approvingly, "all

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY



together, looking up—look at the sky, Thomas, dear—now!”

And from the throats of the united Wilbour family rang such an unexpected and thrilling shout as would have made the fortune of any stage-manager of Bowery melodrama.

“My God!” they cried, then ceased abruptly,

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

for the extraordinary and undreamed of effect of the exclamation proved altogether too much for two of the performers, and Tom and Susy staggered back, weak with laughter, and literally rolled down the little slope, in which manœuvre their sons enthusiastically joined, leaving Aunt Emma, a disgusted Goddess of Liberty, alone beneath the flag-staff.

When they had picked themselves up and climbed, still giggling hysterically, to the seat of the experiment in applied patriotism, Miss Wilbour had composed herself, and was engaged in the morning paper, which she had brought out with her. Susy would have glided over the incident with the placidity known only to the mothers of boys, but Tom could not resist the opportunity of a final shot, and observed, as he settled himself beside her:

“You see, Aunt Em, it’s all because we’re not Jews or Italians. I’m sure we could have pulled it off if we’d been even as nationally inclined as the Irish, perhaps—but it’s the stern repression of the Anglo-Saxon nature that—”

“Anglo-Saxon grandmother!” Aunt Emma interrupted briefly; “it’s all very well to joke, Tom, but there won’t be any Americans—in spirit—if this keeps up, I can tell you.”

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

“Good Heavens, Aunt Em, what do you mean? If we keep on rolling down hill?”

“Miss Shaughnessy says that the — the other Americans are just as easy to train into it as the Irish, if you take them young enough, but that the older ones act foolish about it—just like you and Susy.”

“The ‘other Americans’ is good, anyhow,” Tom commented. “Who’s Miss Shaughnessy—not one of the ‘others,’ I take it?”

“She’s the principal of the public school,” said Aunt Emma, with a curious decision of manner, “and a very fine woman.”

“Well, well,” observed her nephew, “since when have you been so interested in the public schools, Aunt Em? I didn’t know women could be principals, anyway—I thought they had to be men.”

“I don’t doubt you did,” replied Aunt Emma with a certain asperity, “but you were mistaken, you see. Women are not entirely helpless, even in this country.”

“For Heaven’s sake, I should think not!” Tom declared in amazement. “‘Even in this country’! Good Lord! If you can show me any country where they’re less helpless—”

“Finland,” Aunt Emma articulated abruptly, causing her niece and nephew to stare at her in empty surprise.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"Finland! Why, Aunt Emma, what do you mean?" Susy cried. "Do you mean the Finland that the Sears's waitress came from?"

"I do," said Aunt Emma firmly, "though that is a curious method of describing a country, Susy."

"Well, but—but what do the women do there?" Tom inquired vaguely, touching the short fuse of a fire-cracker with a bit of the brown, pungent light-stick known to youthful patriots as "punk," and tossing the cracker cleverly so that it exploded in mid-air, to the delighted admiration of his sons.

"Did you ask me what they did in Finland?" Aunt Emma repeated, with a curious determination in her manner, as the tumult and the shouting (to use the words of a modern bard) died.

"Why, yes," Tom returned carelessly—"yes, Aunt Em, since we appear to be conducting this conversation on the lines of a nigger-minstrel show—yes, Brother Bones, I do ask you, What do the women do in Finland?"

"They vote," said Aunt Emma shortly.

Tom dropped the punk from a relaxed hand, and it burned, slowly and silently, but surely, through his gray flannel trousers. Not till the scorching heat stung his actual person did he develop sufficient presence of mind to push it

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

off, and even the round, smoking hole in the light fabric elicited only a casual murmur from Susy, so utterly taken aback were the Wilbours by this brief announcement of their relative.

The unusual silence impressed even the children, who turned inquiring faces toward their elders, and Martin asked curiously:

“How do they vote, Aunt Emma?”

“With ballots,” said Miss Wilbour firmly—“with ballots, Martin. As *you* will see some day,” she added with a concealed meaning of some sort, evidently, all the more dreadful because no one knew just what meaning it concealed.

“Ballads?” Martin repeated. “Like—like ‘Young Lockervar has come out in the West’? I like those. Does the Sears’s waitress know that one?”

“The two are very much alike,” said Tom, catching his breath at last—“at least somebody or other once said he didn’t care who cast one if he could get royalties on the other, I believe.”

“But as he was a man, there was nothing to prevent him from doing both,” said Aunt Emma quickly.

Tom looked at her and shook his head sadly once or twice. Then he took a cigarette from his pocket, tapped the end slightly, lit it, and puffed out a full breath.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"So that was it all the time!" he said reproachfully. "Oh, Aunt Em! Aunt Em! Married women's property, indeed! Child labor, forsooth! And I never once suspected! Do you want my vote, woman? Take it, take it! It never did anything yet but keep me from winning a silver cup on Election Day."

Aunt Emma nodded sadly, and yet as one who takes a certain pride in seeing her deepest convictions fulfilled.

"Just what Miss Shaughnessy says!" she mourned. "The sex that puts a paltry game of golf before its country's welfare is the sex that stands selfishly in the way of—in the way of—"

"The only other sex there is," her nephew finished helpfully. "Go on, Aunt Em, get it out of your system and don't mind me! Is this part of the public-school instruction? When did you begin to feel this way? I believe you're planning to be mayor before you die—they always get in with the schools."

"Not at all, Tom, not at all," she replied eagerly, "that's just what the better class of women don't want. We don't want to hold any office—it's only to vote."

"The more fools you," her nephew remarked impolitely. "Why not draw the salary while

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

you're about it? And incidentally, dear aunt, keep your eye on anybody of the name of Shaughnessy when it comes to office-holding, and watch 'em get away with it! There's no one, short of a Reilly, to beat 'em! I'll bet you your friend the principal knows the proper length of a mayor's train this minute, and whether plaids or stripes will be most worn."

"It's all very well to make fun, Tom," Aunt Emma persisted, "but making fun is not arguing, and can't be accepted as such any longer. As the Reverend Byram Boskowitz told us at the Normal Luncheon last week—"

"The Normal Luncheon!" Susy cried. "Was that where you were the day you missed the 4.20? What on earth is a normal luncheon?"

"It is a luncheon of all the alumnæ of the Normal Training School for Teachers," Miss Wilbour informed them quickly, transparently delighted to have relieved her open mind of such unnatural secrecy, "and there were over a hundred of them there. Miss Shaughnessy gave me a ticket for the speeches, afterward. She was toast-mistress. And you ought to have heard Doctor Boskowitz, Tom; he was wonderfully interesting—and he certainly is masculine enough for anybody," she added conclusively.

"Really!" said Tom with what any one but



"DR. BOSKOWITZ WAS WONDERFULLY INTERESTING."

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

Aunt Emma would have regarded as suspicious interest. "Can't you give us some of his masculine ideas?"

"Yes, indeed, Tom," she answered with pleasure; "they're here in this paper; I saved it especially."

And, assuming her glasses, the good woman read, with the impressive monotony dedicated to newspaper interpretation, the following selection:

"Dr. Byram Boskowitz charges the Alumnæ of the X—— Normal Training School with favoring the harem idea of women—not to the full Oriental limit, but in the sense of a confined, restricted life.

"And that was rather startling, Tom and Susy," she interpolated, looking mildly at them over her glasses, "but you will see he makes it even stronger.

"Your harem of the United States may be a little larger than the Mohammedan woman's," he told them, "but your 'sphere' is not a sphere—it is not a hemisphere; it is only a segment."

"Well, well!" said Tom with increasing interest, "isn't he the startling old bird, though? Only a segment, eh? What did the Shaughnessy think of that?"

"I know you are all devoted to your wash-tubs and your children," Aunt Emma read on hastily, *"but*

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

the question is whether these should absorb your vitality."

"Hold on!" Tom interrupted at this; "didn't you say this luncheon was in New York? Wasn't the Reverend Byram just a little, just a little, teeny, weeny—"

"Well, Tom," said Miss Wilbour honestly, "as Miss Shaughnessy said afterward, that was the only weak point he made."

"Ah!" (her nephew eyed her closely) "not so many wash-tubs, perhaps . . ."

"Well, you see, Tom, they were all teachers but eleven—*they* married superintendents of schools—and only six of *them* had any children. So, so—well, that part didn't apply so much."

"No, I can see that," her nephew replied readily enough. "So that was his only weak point, was it? I should say that was rather a good thing, Aunt Em, for many points like that would be likely to swamp the lecture, don't you think? Well, go on. Did he add any more little gems?"

"*Surely no woman should be satisfied to be merely the mother of a family,*" Aunt Emma continued, stopping involuntarily at his chuckling.

"Dear me, no indeed," he interrupted hastily; "in the circumstances, I must say, dear aunt, I should think the majority of the normal alumnae

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

— the *very* normal *alumnæ* — would have been highly *dissatisfied!*”

“Tommy,” Mrs. Wilbour warned him, “don’t be absurd!”

“Absurd!—I?” Tom looked highly virtuous. “With the Reverend Boskowitz on deck? Toots, you wrong me!”

“I—I don’t think there’s any more,” Aunt Emma began somewhat unconvincingly, but her nephew snatched the paper with a quick movement from her hand, and defending himself easily against her feeble attempts, read with great relish the peroration of the lecture.

“*I would invite you to become dangerous women* (for Heaven’s sake, Aunt Em!)—*did you hear that at some recent foregathering of females* (females is good—perhaps they weren’t Normal) *a woman from Boston warned her hearers against certain women who try to improve social conditions as ‘dangerous women’* (look out for Miss Shaughnessy, Aunt Em!)?—*I would have you become dangerous women* (I take it back, Aunt Em, you needn’t look out for her at all!): *dangerous to hoary, senile injustice, antiquated civics, superstition, disease.*”

Mr. Wilbour handed the folded paper ceremoniously back and drew a long breath.

“I’m no palmist, dear aunt,” he said at last,

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"but I would guarantee to give the Reverend Byram a reading free, and urge him to look out for a tall, strong woman resembling a trained nurse, because if he ever meets one, it's all up with him, if she has a straight-jacket with her. I can see a large building like an institution, right from here, looming up in his life."

"Of course, Tom, you can take all these things the wrong way," Aunt Emma began.

"If you mean Boskowitz, I wouldn't take him any way," said Tom decidedly—"not as a gift. And I must say, Aunt Em, that if he has a vote, you might as well have five."

"Perhaps the address wasn't quite so suitable for just those women—"

"Will you tell me any women it would have been suitable for? Lord! Harems and wash-tubs and mothers of families to a pack of normal school-teachers! Although," Mr. Wilbour added thoughtfully, "what d'you suppose he'd have said to Abnormal ones? It makes my head swim!"

"Did you know," Aunt Emma observed somewhat irrelevantly, "that women commit only one-fifth as many crimes as men?"

Her nephew stared uncomprehendingly at her.

"That is taken from statistics," she continued triumphantly, "collected by—oh, by somebody important, and so, as that Doctor—you remember

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

that Englishman that spoke over here and said he was so surprised that the American woman should be behind Russians and Bohemians—as he said, women would lift politics out of the slime. He made that, at least, very clear.”

Tom still gazed at her dumbly, but here, to the surprise of both, Susy, who was holding Thomas, now grown sleepy with excitement and heat, entered the political arena.

“I think it’s awfully silly, Aunt Emma,” she said, “to worry about all that when, as a matter of fact, most women don’t want to vote anyhow. It’s just as that nice old Doctor What’s-his-name says: if they wanted to, of course they would, but they don’t. I don’t know a single one that does except Minnie Sears, and she says it would be very repugnant to her feelings to ride in that smelly old coupé they send ’round for voters in Laurelmere, but still she would do it for Dorothy’s sake.”

“Suffering Satan!” Tom cried, “how would it help Dorothy?”

“Oh, that about the slime that Aunt Emma said, I suppose,” Susy returned vaguely, “but then Minnie would do anything if it was disagreeable enough.”

Aunt Emma began fumbling in the capacious pocket that dignified all her dresses, and pro-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

duced, to the complete mental rout of her niece and nephew, a small red blank-book. To be more exact, it had once been blank, but was now nearly filled with notes on the various lectures she had attended during Martin's infancy, at which period she had eagerly collected every available theory of child culture, to the mingled alarm and amusement of the young Wilbours. They had not seen this book since long before she left them, nearly two years ago now, to join domestic forces with a favorite cousin of her own age, and with sudden memories of those days, that seemed so long past, when boyish Martin was babyish Binks and Thomas was not at all, moved them to join hands quickly, half with tears, half with laughter. Binks, who would not talk, and, when at last he would, talked unquotably: Binks, who would not walk until tied into a humiliating creeping-bag; Binks, who bore so patiently enough psychological experiments to have permanently stunted the growth of a less-determined infant—all this the red book brought up to them, and they glanced wonderingly with one accord at the trousered citizen now searching hopefully among the burned-out fire-crackers for one possible treasure, his hat cocked over one ear, his hands in his bulging pockets, and—yes, an actual whistle on his lips!

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

Aunt Emma's voice woke them as from a dream.

"It is just there, Susy, that the most important point of all comes in," she cried triumphantly. "Miss Shaughnessy cut this bit out of a great speech—it was in the *Sun*—and bought fifty copies to cut from, and mailed them to all the women—the uninterested women—she knew. She said if that didn't stir them, nothing would. Just after it the clipping says the house fairly shook with applause, so that the man couldn't go on for some minutes—it was a man, you'll notice! Listen to this:

"As for the assertion that women did not want the vote, Abraham Lincoln had said, when he was told that the negro didn't want the vote, that if the negro had sunk so low he hugged his chains, the hour of his deliverance had struck.

"*Had struck!*" Aunt Emma repeated solemnly. "And that is what convinced me, Tom and Susy. I suddenly saw that I was just like that negro! For I didn't want to vote then," she added frankly—"that is, not particularly."

"Dear, dear!" Tom murmured, "is it as bad as that? Well, that certainly is a smasher. That ends it, as far as I'm concerned. I'm all in. All I can say is, when you *are* President, don't forget that here's a likely young Attorney-General, will

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

you? There's a good fellow! The only other thing I can think of in this connection—and Heaven knows it's a mere bagatelle, after an argument like that—I hope, I do earnestly hope, my dear aunt, that your use of the vote won't resemble

the negro's—after his hour had struck!"

"I—I don't think I know just what you mean, Tom," Miss Wilbour began uncertainly.

"Of course you don't," he returned cheerfully, "neither does the man who made that speech, when the house, as

the *Sun* so pithily puts it, fairly shook—I should think it might have. However, why should you waste your vitality, as Friend Boskowitz said, in understanding it? Don't understand—just vote. In the words of the poet, 'Vote, and the coon



THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

votes with you; think, and you think alone'! —It's going to rain. Get up, you unnatural woman," he turned upon Susy, who at Thomas's request was making a collar of kisses for his hot little neck, and taking great pains to make the kisses join neatly, "it's sickening to us — Miss Shaughnessy and Aunt Em and me, I mean—to see you sitting there, dead to every responsibility, with the negro sinking and striking all around you, and you hugging your chains like—like anything!"

"Pooh! I'm not," said Susy, laughing and completing the collar with an elaborately constructed buckle of complicated design, which entailed an enormous deal of kissing, and tickled Thomas so that he squealed again, "I'm only hugging my baby!"

"Toots," Tom declared, waving his hand oratorically and concealing it between the second and third button of his coat, "you have hit it! In your benighted, feeble-minded fashion you have certainly hit it—it's the same thing!"

They turned toward the house, laughing, dragging Thomas between them, and Aunt Emma stood puzzled beneath the flag-staff, whose banner hung languidly now in the dense calm that preceded the coming thunder-storm. A few slow drops sprinkled her forehead already, and she

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

was starting to follow the others when she remembered the new flag and turned hastily to lower it. Tugging at the fastenings with nervous fingers—Aunt Emma detested thunder—she seemed only to knot them harder, and her frantic tug at the main rope appeared to have no effect whatever. She put her whole weight on the rope: the flag did not move.

“The thing’s bewitched!” she cried irritably. “Martin, run and call your father to come and take in the flag before it pours.”

“Can’t you do it, Aunt Emma?” asked Martin curiously.

“No, I can’t,” she said, “it’s too heavy. Hurry and call your father.”

“Why, I’ll do it for you,” he assured her tolerantly; “I don’t need to call father. Didn’t you see how he ran her up?” And his little brown fingers hovered over the knot.

“Ran *it* up,” she corrected; “a flag isn’t *she*, Martin.”

“That’s what Myron Plummer says—run her up,” he replied placidly. “You were pullin’ on the wrong rope. It’s a slip-knot.”

And the flag began to descend, easily and steadily, while Miss Wilbour watched it, half chagrined, half amused.

“Evidently a she can’t take it down, even if



MAKING A COLLAR OF KISSES

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

it is she." And she watched him slip the bright folds loose from the guy-rope.

"Oh, well," he said, with a curious effect of his father in his gesture and voice, "flags is men's work. Father and I'll take care of her."

"Indeed," she answered, absurdly nettled by the amazing precision with which he wove and wove again the loose ropes, pursing his lips in unconscious imitation of Myron Plummer, and breathing heavily as he clumsily but with a certain rough effectiveness folded the length of canvas together and knotted them into a compact bundle with the loose, short end that depended from one corner—"indeed! But I wanted this flag, Master Martin—neither of you two men, I notice."

"Oh, well, that's all right," he said absently, making the main ropes taut about the lower brace of the pole, in a fever of impatience to effect a triumphant finish before Myron, already hastening toward them, could interfere—"that's all right—you can want 'em. We'll put 'em up and take 'em down, though."

"But can't I do anything else, Martin?" she cried, seizing his hand and hurrying from the scudding drops. "Won't you let me do anything else for my flag?"

He caught instinctively at the note of real

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

seriousness in her voice and did his best for her.

“Oh yes,” he began, “you can—you can—” A great clap of thunder drove them at a run to shelter, and, with a sudden memory of the patriotic drill of an hour before, he concluded hastily, “You can point to her, Aunt Emma!”



V

WHICH DEALS WITH ONE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

“T'S no use, Toots,” said Mr. Wilbour firmly—“not one bit of use at all. I can't do it.”

“You mean you won't,” Susy retorted reproachfully. “I think it's horrid of you—and only an hour and a half, too!”

“But what an hour and a half! My dear girl, it depresses me for the day; it eats up my whole morning; it spoils my lunch, and it's the only day I get in the fresh air—do you consider that?”

Susy wavered.

“Well, of course, Tom, it does seem too bad if you can't get the air,” she admitted, innocently

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

oblivious to the damp March wind outside and the cheerful arrangement of wood-fire, pipe, and *Sherlock Holmes* awaiting the master of the house.

"That's what I told Mr. Wakeman, and he said that he thoroughly appreciated all that, but he couldn't help feeling that there was all Sunday afternoon."

"The deuce he did!"

Tom glared sardonically at the absent Mr. Wakeman.

"Well, you can tell him that *I* can't help feeling that if he had a man's-size job, with something else to do but trot up and down in the air all day, six days a week, if he wants to, getting six per cent. discount from the department stores just because his collar buttons in the back—"

"Tom!"

"You told me that yourself."

"I didn't say that about his collar, Tom," said Susy reprovingly.

"Well, then, why *does* he get it?"

Mrs. Wilbour giggled reminiscently.

"Mrs. Wakeman tried to get a discount at Bark & Milford's for his cigars," she confided, "but they don't do it any more; she was awfully angry—she said there was no respect for the cloth in this country."

"I should hope there wasn't," her husband re-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

joined scornfully, "if that's the test of it, by George! Will you tell me why Wakeman should get his cigars any cheaper than I do?"

"I suppose it's just a sort of custom," Susy remarked pacifically.

"Yes, and so was burning witches, but it's gone out, lately," said Tom with effective brevity, stuffing his pipe decisively and ending the discussion, from his point of view.

"But really, Tom, that hasn't anything to do with the question, you know," Susy persisted—"cigars and collars and all that."

"Oh, hasn't it?" her husband cried. "You think not? Ask a few men, and see what they say, that's all!"

"But a change is the same as a rest, everybody says."

Susy had given up the contention, but she could not resist this parting shot—an ill-advised one, for Tom turned on her triumphantly.

"The Sunday that I went with you this winter may represent your idea of a rest, Susan Wilbour, but leading other people's bulldogs out of church and side-stepping an epileptic—"

"But the poor man can't help having them, Tom."

"No, but I can help assisting at any function he's likely to adorn," said Tom grimly.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"Mr. Wakeman says he hasn't the heart to forbid him to come—it's his only pleasure," Susy explained.

"That's all right, that's Wakeman's business," Tom returned briskly, "but it's not my job, that's all."

"Well, then, I suppose I'd better get ready and go alone," said Susy disconsolately, plumping the cushions on the library couch and eying the damp, gray landscape with some distaste; "that is, unless—unless you'd rather I stayed with you. . . ."

"Of course I'd rather," her husband replied promptly; "the only chance I get to see anything of you."

"Then it's my duty to stay," she announced firmly, "and I'll go some Sunday when you can work outdoors."

Mr. Wilbour mended the fire with alacrity, and all seemed in the best possible train when the appearance of Martin in the doorway, crackling in fresh white duck, a white sailor hat perched on his decorously parted locks, and a beaming and expectant smile on his lips, produced a sigh of recollection from his mother.

"Oh, Martin dear, I'm afraid we can't go to-day—father doesn't want to," she began—"and what *have* you got on your summer suit for?"

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

Martin looked portentously displeased, and gazed accusingly at his father.

"You said we would—you said so!" he began chidingly, "and I got all ready on purpose. This is just what I wore when we went before. Father needn't go—just us two. You promised."

Susy looked uneasily about the room as if to gain inspiration from the furniture, and avoid, at the same time, the faces of her husband and her son, whose expressions at these family crises were wont to resemble each other remarkably.

"I did tell him, Tom," she began, "he is so anxious to go . . ."

"Very well," said Tom quickly, "that's right enough, but I have told you more than once, Susy, that you have simply got to begin making the boy understand that things happen and people change their minds. It's got so that this whole house is held up right and left in order to keep promises made to the children that never should have been promises, anyhow. I approve of the principle when it's a matter of importance, but you can't keep people on a schedule that way, you know, and Binks is old enough to use his judgment—aren't you, old fellow?"

Martin, who had followed the meaning of this speech quite accurately, though unacquainted with many of the words in it, pulled his mouth

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

down sulkily and began to stub his toes against the door-sill.

"She said she'd go," he muttered; "she said so. She said she'd—"

"That will do," Tom interrupted decidedly.



"I don't doubt your mother said she'd go, but she has changed her mind. She thought I was going with you, but I—I can't manage it very well to-day, and so we're all going to stay at home. It's a damp day, and I think it will rain before noon."

"Why can't you manage it very well to-day?"

"Because I can't, that's all."

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"We could put down the curtains on the carriage."

"We won't discuss it, Martin. I don't care to get the wagon all muddy."

"Myron's got to get the paper, anyway; then it 'll *have* to get muddy."

"Stop talking about it now, and go up and change that ridiculous suit."

Martin rattled the door-knob exasperatingly.

"If it didn't rain, it wouldn't get muddy, anyway!" he whined.

Tom set his jaw and rose from the chair he was stretched out in, and Martin abruptly relinquished both whine and door-knob, to his mother's great relief.

"I don't want him to think that we don't keep our word, dear," she murmured as the door was discreetly closed and the white canvas shoes pattered virtuously toward the stairs.

"I don't believe his mind is poisoned to any extent," Tom rejoined easily, profiting by the softness always engendered in Susy by his successful interference in domestic policies, and kissing her comfortably under her left ear; "he's not a fool, my dear girl. Why, see here, Toots, suppose we had six children—"

"Goodness, Tommy!"

"Yes, of course, but people do. And suppose

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

no grown person in the house could ever change its mind in regard to anything that had been said to any one of the six—don't you see how ridiculous that would be? We'd all go crazy."

"Yes, I suppose that's so," she answered thoughtfully.

"*I'm* disappointed, *you're* disappointed," Tom pursued, pleased at her reasonable attitude and enlarging upon his theme; "we all have to run against things some time or other, you know, Toots, and the kid had better find it out, it seems to me. As far as that goes," he added, glancing sidewise at her as she leaned against him in the chair, "he's morally certain to find out that some of the Reverend Wakeman's views aren't exactly in line with other little facts he's due to pick up sooner or later, and perhaps he won't be so shocked if he gets a little practice at home."

"Why, Tom dear, everybody says that Mr. Wakeman's so advanced—Mrs. Strenway was so surprised to find such a broad-minded man in such a small place, she said."

"Um," her husband returned cryptically, "I'll bet she was. Harriet Strenway was always surprised at anybody's knowing anything she didn't, and it was those telling facts about the Four Hundred that got her, my dear. I don't believe they take the same newspaper."

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"Tom!"

"That's all right, Toots, but now that we're on the subject, will you kindly tell me what there is that strikes you as particularly broad-minded in preaching against the vices of multi-millionaires to thirty-eight people, of whom not three have over three thousand dollars a year? I may be narrow, myself, but I can't see the point."

"Oh, well, Tom, Mrs. Strenway meant that it was very brave of him—"

"Brave? In Heaven's name, Susan Wilbour, how was it brave? Not one of the multi-millionaires was there! I shouldn't think it would require any very reckless state of mind to scold about the number of quarts of champagne consumed weekly in the combined restaurants of New York to old lady Purdy, who lives on buttermilk for her digestion. And the only reward for his bravery in the case of that noble effort on luxurious yachting, that pleased Aunt Em so when she was here, appears to have been that the druggist on the corner left in a huff and took his daughter out of the choir."

"That was because he thought Mr. Wakeman meant his cat-boat, Tom."

"Exactly. But as he didn't mean the cat-boat, and as nobody else in the congregation ever came within ten feet of a yacht, probably, it seems

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

to have been misplaced excitement on his part. Don't you think so?"

"Well," Susy admitted, "it was too bad about poor Mr. Pillbridge, because of course nobody would think of grudging him the pleasure he gets from that cat-boat Saturday afternoons—he loaned it to the Fresh Air Fund picnic, too. But his election-day sermon, Tom, you must admit—"

"My darling girl!" Tom wagged his head hopelessly at her. "I didn't have the pleasure of assisting at that bit of oratory," he pursued thoughtfully, "but if it was anywhere nearly correctly reported in the local press, it's a good thing Wakeman never tried for any other job than his present one. He'd have a terribly hard time getting it in the town he preached that sermon in, I can tell you."

The rain had now begun in good earnest, and with a natural if not wholly logical conviction that nature had thoroughly justified Tom's course of action, Susy settled herself to the belated correspondence inevitably delegated to rainy Sundays and wrote busily for a few minutes, to be interrupted shortly by Bell, whose apologetic countenance bore the unmistakable expression worn by the bearer of a ridiculous message which must, nevertheless, be delivered, according to previous contract.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"Excuse me for interrupting you, Mrs. Wilbour," she began, "but Martin is obstinate for me to come and tell you can he put away those white duck trousers and the other things in a special box, till he needs 'em? He says he must have a church-box. And he wants moth-balls in with 'em. Yes'm, I told him I was sure you wouldn't allow it, especially as moths don't eat duck, or canvas shoes either, but he wants every stitch of that suit to go in, clean handkerchief and stockings and all. Then, he says, it 'll be all ready under his bed, so he can put his hand on it in a hurry. That was what he said, really, Mr. Wilbour. I know," Bell concluded with the privileged frankness of an old retainer, "I know Mr. Wilbour doesn't always believe Martin says things just as I say he does, but it's so—I always repeat very exact. And he wants his father to write 'church-box' in large printing, in ink, on the cover. He says he knows of a very good box in the blue-room closet."

"Church-box?" Susy queried. "What an idea! What can the child mean?"

"Well, you see, Mrs. Wilbour," Bell continued with a virtuous but self-effacing air, "Martin not being a member of the Sunday-school, of course he don't get any of them little church-boxes—they fill them with pennies, and then at Easter

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

they pile them up, and march around and sing. The other little boys at school mostly have them (they have them in nearly all the churches now), and so he hears about them. And of course you know what a child is. So what he says is, if he can't have a church-box for money, he'll have one for trousers."

Bell's manner, conveying subtly, as it did, that human nature, if balked of a pious desire, takes refuge in less estimable flights of fancy, at the risk of those responsible for its abridgments, was not without its due effect on Susy, who was always prompt to be influenced by such impalpable criticism, and easily led to believe in the strength of any position held with sufficient decision by anybody else.

"I suppose the poor child *does* feel it," she said thoughtfully, "and if that foolish Miss Ada Reed wasn't so ridiculously High Church and didn't teach the children such absurd things, I'd have sent him long ago. But she has all the little ones, and Mr. Wakeman can't very well remove her, considering all her stepfather does for the church. Not that he approves, himself. But ever since she tried to get little Willie Weeks to give up meat in Lent—he was only seven, you know, Tom, and Mrs. Weeks was furious—I resolved that I simply couldn't send Martin, he does take such

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

ideas, you know, and he's so obstinate with them. So Mrs. Weeks sends Willie to the Congregational Sunday-school now—they use a lot of our service, anyway, and Mr. Weeks simply put his foot down, she said."

"Did he put it down on Ada?" Tom inquired eagerly. "I hope so!"

"Well, no," said Susy simply, "he couldn't very well—she's that big woman that plays the organ. Don't you remember?"

"Oh, she's that one, is she? Well, see here, Toots, the next time you see Ada, tell her in a friendly way from me that it isn't meat she ought to be giving up, if there's anything in the popular theory—it's potatoes."

"My dear Tom, you don't give up potatoes in Lent," Susy assured him seriously.

"I'll bet Ada doesn't," he responded with conviction, pulling hard at his pipe, "hence my advice."

Bell coughed politely at this point, and Susy, recalled to her maternal problems, frowned obediently, and attacked them again.

"What would you think of the Congregational Sunday-school, Tom?" she inquired. "Then he wouldn't tease for church so. And he is really too restless to go. He keeps me on pins and needles, and I can't follow the service at all. It

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

seems so odd he should want to go so much. If he had to, as some children do, he'd loathe it, of course—I know I always did. I can't see what he expects to like; there's very little music, and they do the Litany every single Sunday, and the sermon does seem so long."

"It's only an hour and a half," Tom repeated absently, "and a change is a rest, really."

Susy blushed, and tried not to smile.

"Then it's you that have corrupted my good habits, Tom Wilbour, and you ought to be ashamed! And lots of the girls I knew before I was married say the same thing."

"You told me awhile ago that there wasn't one of those girls you didn't think much improved," he remarked casually. "Did you mean you found them more immoral?"

"Why, Tom Wilbour, of course not—the idea! But of course going to church is one thing, and—"

"And morality is another," he interrupted quickly. "Just so, and that's what I've been trying to instil into you, lo! these many years, Tootie."

The ensuing silence while Mrs. Wilbour endeavored to adjust her mind to this situation, into which she had the confused feeling that she

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

had been unduly hurried, was broken by Bell, who stood immovably by the door.

"I know why Martin wants to go, Mrs. Wilbour," she announced, as one who is ever ready and willing to contribute to the solid information of any company, once the said company has finished with the empty raillery that too often passes for conversation.

"Do you, Bell?" cried Susy hopefully. "Why is it?"

"Because he wants to see that man have an applectic fit," said Bell, with no particular emotion of any sort. "He often speaks of it to Thomas and me, and complains that he never gets the chance. And yet the man has had a good many. I've seen three, myself."

"Why—why—why, Bell, how dreadful!" Susy gasped. "The horrid boy! I'll never take him again—never!"

"Yes'm," returned the nurse imperturbably, "I thought you'd feel that way, most prob'ly. But there's no fits at the Cong'ational Sunday-school, and they have fine entertainments there. Socials for the grown people, and picnics and tricks with handkerchiefs for the children. And they have the church-boxes, too. A good many from Martin's school goes there, and they certainly do give fine Christmas presents."

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

“Good!” Tom burst out enthusiastically, “that is the place for Binks, I can see that at a glance! I wish they’d had tricks with handkerchiefs when I went to Sunday-school. But all they had was Golden Texts, and Aunt Em was a regular inquisition in the Golden-Text line, I tell you. I used the only handkerchiefs in that game. That’s a fine idea, too, of the presents. They believe it’s more blessed to give than to receive, you see, Susy, and naturally they want to corner all the blessings.”

“You say everything upside down, Tom,” Susy complained. “You’re worse than Martin. That will do, Bell; let Martin put his suit in the box if he likes—it can’t hurt anything. But no moth-balls, of course, and I’m ashamed of him about that poor man.”

“Yes’m,” said Bell, and departed, leaving the parents of her charge to muse on his reasons for seeking the sanctuary to any extent pleasing to them.

The next Sabbath smiled on Martin wending his way in triumph to the Congregational Sunday-school, the convenience of its hour, as opposed to the unreasonably early session at the Episcopal church, where it preceded the regular service, proving a passable excuse for his straying from the fold—it never having occurred to Susy,

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

thoroughgoing American empress as she was, to advance her husband's early associations (which had been, to judge from his resigned comments, of a stringent and relentless nature) with the church now adorned by his son.

The teacher of the Infant Class, which Martin, though nearly eight now and therefore eligible to more advanced standing, was forced to join, on account of his ignorance of dogma and procedure generally—an ignorance approved by Tom and suffered by Susy—was a mild, stout old lady of genial address and long experience with children. She led them lustily in song, in a cracked, hearty voice; recited more or less irrelevant texts, selected, obviously, with a view rather to brevity than intelligibility, in chorus with them; invented many little honors and dignities, such as book-distributing, chair-arranging, and black-board-cleaning, which greatly facilitated her own ease; and had hit upon an ingenious system of solitary confinement under the pipe-organ for refractory cases—all of which had made her amazingly popular and kept her in office upward of twenty years. Her theory as to the successful conduct of an Infant Class, as she confided to Bell, with that young woman's complete approbation, was plenty of drinks of water and enough exercise of leg and lung to relieve the excess of

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY



animal spirits so often noted in very young Christians; and modern science, however it might differ with her theological views, could but uphold her psychology.

Martin returned fascinated with her personality and methods, deeply impressed with the awful recent judgment upon Willie Weeks (who, freed from the asceticism of his previous ritualistic instructress, would appear to have indulged in meat banquets to the complete annihilation of his spiritual nature, and passed, in consequence, three-quarters of an hour under the organ), and infatuated by the possession of a small card, highly colored with forget-me-nots and decorated

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

with the motto "Thou God Seest Me," which he assured his astonished parents marked his extraordinary proficiency in the Scriptures. He passed the afternoon pleasantly—to himself, at least—in teaching Thomas to sing *Onward, Christian Soldiers!* and exhibited a stiff, bemottoed "church-box" with such ingenuous pride and anxiety that Tom, for the honor of the family, was forced to contribute pennies out of all reason to a fund ultimately destined for the particular brand of heathen he disapproved of most!

His glowing encomiums quite shamed poor Susy, who felt, with her usual ready absorption of any new idea, that only her carelessness and Tom's cruelty had deprived the child of two years' companionship and training, for old Mrs. Singleton's simple common-sense morality and code of nursery virtue were indisputably reasonable and unprejudiced; and at her son's request she accompanied him gladly to one of the sessions, where he shone in an undoubtedly correct if somewhat hurried rendition of the Beatitudes, and vaingloriously distributed books from the little lending library with all the air of an usher.

Mrs. Singleton related, in much the concise and rapid-fire delivery of the music-hall monologist, her justly famous expurgated version of the discovery of Moses by Pharaoh's daughter, at an age

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

when the total inexperience of the principal character should have protected him, it would seem, from the necessity of any very great amount of literary excision; but as the brisk old lady confided afterward to Susy, there was precious few of the Bible stories that was fit to be told to such small children just as they stood, and ever since she had one little girl break a blood-vessel crying over the cruelty of Joseph's brethren she'd been pretty careful how she put things.

"Of course, Mrs. Wilbour, we all know there's a great lesson in 'em, and one we're qualified to understand at our age, but they're tender-hearted when it comes to partings in families and such like, though they don't mind blood or killings by armies, and all that," she chatted volubly at the close of the exercises, adjusting her prim little veil over her good-humored nose before a tiny cracked mirror ingeniously concealed in the back of a plaster cast of the kneeling Samuel, while she bestowed her odds and ends of illustrated text-cards, candied flag-root, reading-glasses, and stray handkerchiefs in an ageless black silk bag with frayed drawing-strings.

"I don't even say much about the Flood any more—there's no telling how they'll take it; and in a good many ways the Flood's hard to explain, Mrs. Wilbour, if you've ever thought of it. When

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

old Mr. Seelye was sup'rintendent he bought me a fine big set of Bible pictures that flopped over on a roll, like an almanac, you know, and said they'd be a grand thing for the children, being all by great artists. Well, the very first one was an awful real scene of Adam and Eve and the snake, and I'm not overfond of snakes myself, so I didn't dwell on it much, but the Wetmore twins (perhaps you've noticed them in the village—they're young ladies now) got all upset over that snake (he *was* pretty green and dreadfully striped), and I declare, those children had to have a night-light for years! Their mother was a good deal put out over it, but of course she didn't blame me.

"Then came Cain and Abel. And I must say I didn't see that there was any need for showing Cain quite so fierce, with a tremendous jagged rock, right in the act of bumping Abel's head—Mrs. Davis always insisted it gave Adelaide the idea of treating her little friends that way when they wouldn't mind her. I don't think that was quite fair, though, hardly; children do think up *some* things for themselves.

"But nobody liked the Flood. It was by Doré, a French artist, and there'd be an arm sticking up here and a leg there, and awful expressions on just heads, that stuck up out of the water all alone.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

Right on the top of something wooden—I suppose it was a dog-house—there was a big Newfoundland dog with one paw over a little one, and its head up as if 'twas howling. Well, all those children thought of was that dog. I couldn't get them to care about Noah or all the animals that *were* saved—it was just that dog. Before I had those pictures I used to talk mostly about the Ark, and not so much about the Flood, you see, and as they had Noah's Arks, lots of them, that always seemed reasonable and held their attention. But nothing would do, now, but that Newfoundland dog—I thought I'd go crazy with them. One little fellow with brown eyes (I can see him now—he died of croup, poor child) he'd look at me so mournful and say, 'What did the poor mother-dog *do*, Mrs. Singleton? Why was that mother-dog bad? I think it was mean of God to drown the poor little puppy, too, Mrs. Singleton—was *it* bad?' And then they'd all look so solemn, and I couldn't get their minds off for anything I could do.

“‘I wish,’ says one of 'em, ‘that old Noah was drowned and the poor mother-dog got into the Noah's Ark with her puppy!’ And then they all joined in, and fin'ly I had to tell Mr. Seelye I was much obliged, but as far as I was concerned they c'd put those artists' pictures into

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

the missionary-box, and I'd go on as I used to."

There was no doubt that these were the words of a specialist and a successful one, and Susy, much relieved to find that Tom shared her respect for the garrulous old lady, and agreed with her that Binks might form acquaintance with the Scriptures under worse auspices, dismissed the matter from her mind, and beyond spasmodic contributions of pennies to the church-box and polite listening to the various hymns, whose sometimes obscure renderings bespoke her maternal attention, left her son to the hands through which so many young pilgrims had passed without spiritual injury. She had been an active, restless child herself, a confessed tomboy in the eyes of the community, somewhat laxly governed by an indulgent older sister; and as is usual with such natures, she vibrated between a half-acknowledged consciousness that such easy courses had not proved so vicious in the result, after all, and a generous desire to do better (if it should be better) by the little creatures dependent upon her for their earliest and strongest notions of the virtues and proprieties.

It was therefore with a doubtful feeling of having decided too hastily in the matter of religious instruction for her son that she listened

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

to a spirited discussion in the pretty little village library, in the course of which the wife of a local magnate described with pride the flourishing condition of the Methodist Sunday-school, whose discipline, advanced methods, and high standing had passed beyond mere local rumor, and enjoyed a lengthy treatment in a widely read magazine devoted to the interests of the home. This school, which boasted more than two hundred members of all ages, was taught entirely by salaried instructors, graded as accurately as the public schools, defended against triflers by a system of examinations and diplomas, and bulwarked by prizes and honors of which the crowning reward was a free summer course at Chautauqua.

Scorning the petty conflicts with Science which have strewn the battle-field of the Church militant for ages, this broad-minded organization invited discussions with biologists and ethnologists and any daring 'ologists, in brief, who might be minded to come forward, and pointed proudly to a professor of geology among its instructors and the editor of a leading review on its board of directors.

It was a wealthy society, and no expense had been spared in the line of papier-mâché models of Jerusalem in every stage of preservation, plotted

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

maps of the desert wanderings of the Israelites, and stereopticon slides of anything and everything mentioned or hinted at in the entire contents of the Bible, to say nothing of a wonderful set of Eastern costumes assumed in the course of his lectures by the editor of the leading review, whose personally taken photographs of Palestine and Syria were supposed to exceed anything in that direction previously secured to the world.

"Although," Susy added thoughtfully, in the midst of a glowing description of these educational advantages, which, by the way, seemed to fail to interest Mr. Wilbour, "it does seem as if an hour a day through the week, with all their other lessons, was a great deal to ask of the older ones, doesn't it? The daughter of that dentist on Main Street that's so nice with children—what *is* his name?—was working terribly hard to get that Chautauqua scholarship, and having scarlet fever put her back, and it seems they're very strict about absences, and she got quite delirious one night: her mother says she woke up at twelve o'clock screaming, 'How many ephods make a tetrarch?' and they had to take her out of school altogether. As her mother says, in *her* young days they used to learn that even the Lord rested on the seventh day."

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"Still, you must remember that the Lord hadn't so much to learn," Tom suggested thoughtfully, "and there was more time in those days."

As even the professor of geology could not have denied this, Susy accepted it without discussion,



relieved to find that her husband did not feel that they were cheating Martin out of any indispensable system of training—a state of mind into which she had been thrown by the discussion in the village library.

"I thought you would think it was advanced,

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

Tom, and—and scientific and—and all that,” she confided, a little shyly—“more what men would believe in, you know. And better for Martin.”

“For Heaven’s sake, Toots, don’t be so ridiculous and darling!” he begged her. “Am *I* in the habit of waking up at twelve o’clock to inquire how many ephods make a tetrarch? What in thunder do I care—or any other sensible person? Why, see here, Susy, in Greenfield, Mass., where I was brought up (as I may have mentioned before), do you think we didn’t go to Sunday-school? Heavens and earth, we didn’t go anywhere else, it seems to me! When you’ve sat through morning service, and eaten your lunch, and then sat through another service, and then gone to Sunday-school, and eaten supper, and then gone to evening church, you’ll get some idea of what the Sabbath really is—and you making a fuss over one little Litany! The Lord knows I respected those old fellows, though I may not agree with ’em—Deacon Matthews was as sure as death that I was bound straight for eternal torment, and, feeling as he did, he naturally groaned and sweated over me! I can tell you there was little time to waste on modelling Jerusalem in kindergarten clay in Greenfield, Mass.! And if ever you heard Uncle William Wyman pray—’George, I used to be afraid to get into

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

bed nights! There wasn't anything *dilettante* about Uncle William Wyman and he was short on stereopticons, but he was mighty long on the Wrath of God!

"But do you suppose that troubles your friend the dentist's daughter? Nary a bit. She's aiming for Chautauqua, she is, and I'm sure I hope she'll make it, but why should anybody look pious over her and her tetrarchs? Uncle William Wyman was trying to shoot us boys into heaven, with a poor outlook for us if he didn't succeed, and that's why we paid more attention then than we do now. Do you see what I mean?"

"Yes, Tom, I see," said Susy meekly, grateful inwardly that she had not abstracted Martin from Mrs. Singleton's unprogressive methods.

But even these gave way under her in the most startling and unexpected manner a few weeks later, when April had rounded into May, and two years of their country life had slipped by so quickly that they could scarcely believe the quiet calendar. Martin's usual interest in his little day-school—a small private institution for children under ten whose needs failed, for one reason or another, to be met by the kindergarten, but for whom the plunge into the graded public school seemed a little too vigorous—appeared to flag, suddenly, and his excuses for avoiding its

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

short sessions assumed so variable and unreasonable a character that Susy was at her wits' end with his sulky humors and appealed finally to Tom.

"He doesn't seem to have any rash," she explained mournfully, "and I gave him some castor-oil last week, and there's absolutely nothing in his throat, I'm sure. But he acts so ashamed of himself all the time—and yet he says he's done nothing bad, and Martin never lies, Tom. Do you think he needs a tonic?"

"There's something on his mind," said Tom, briefly; "he's not sick, dear. But I don't like his not wanting to play with the other boys, I must say. I wonder if they bully him? Well, he's got to work it out, Toots, that's all. He's big for his age, and there's no need to worry."

But even this calm masculine philosophy wavered slightly when, on returning unexpectedly from the city by an early train, he confronted his son moping near the gate with a lump like a purple walnut under one eye, and a generally dishevelled appearance that spelled but one word to the experienced.

"Well, well!" he began, "you do seem to have let yourself in for it! What's all this about, Binks? You'll frighten your mother, you know. Who's fighting you?"

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

To his consternation, Martin cast himself down on the carriage-drive and burst into furious weeping, a course so abject as to disgust Tom beyond words.

"Here, get up," he growled, "and take it like a man! If you must fight—"

"I wasn't fighting!"

"Nonsense! Do you think I'm blind?"

"I tell you I wasn't!"

"Indeed he wasn't, Mr. Wilbour," panted a female voice, and Bell appeared mysteriously, from the bowels of the earth, apparently. "I ran as fast as I could, but Martin got away from the nasty boy before I could get here."

"Got away?" echoed his father. "Do you mean to say you stood and let a boy pummel you like that and then 'got away'?"

Martin grovelled lower in the driveway and wailed unrestrainedly.

"Perhaps he was smaller," Tom suggested hopefully, "and you didn't feel like fighting him, eh?"

"Oh no, sir," cried Bell eagerly, "he was a little bigger than Martin, Mr. Wilbour—it was that horrid boy near the pond. He taunts him every day we drive by—he's a bad one. But Martin 'll never fight him," she added proudly; "he'd be ashamed, wouldn't you, Martin?"

"I wouldn't be ashamed—I would not!"

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

screamed Martin hysterically, kicking out at her proffered hand. "I can't fight him, but I wouldn't be ashamed, I tell you!"

Tom looked puzzled.

"Suppose you go on up to the house, Bell," he suggested, "and I'll attend to Martin. Now, Binks, sit up and talk to me. . . ."

An hour later Susy looked up from the book she was trying to persuade herself that she was reading, and gasped at the pair before her. Martin's eyes were doubly swollen, for his crying had evidently been prolonged, and Tom was flushed and moved to a degree she could not remember to have seen before.

"Susy," he said sternly, "I want you to understand that whatever Martin may do in the matter that has been troubling him, he does with my consent."

Martin gulped, but in his shy glance at her his mother could not fail to see the old look she had missed for so many days, and wondered at it deeply.

"Mrs. Singleton," Tom continued stiffly, "has most unwarrantably exacted a promise from Martin never to fight another boy, and as this has become known, and as Martin felt that he could not break his word, he was in a fair way to be nagged and bullied to death."

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"Why, Martin, dearest," Susy began in bewilderment, "Mrs. Singleton didn't mean that everybody was to pick on you without your—"

"Excuse me," Tom interrupted severely, "but whether she meant it or not, Susy, that is what it amounts to."

"To turn my other cheek," Martin explained shamefacedly, "and that was this one." He pointed to the bump. "And never to hit 'em back. And to go with 'em twain. And so they all pinch me."

"And she took pains to explain to him," Tom added shortly, "that he would probably be more or less martyred for it, which, of course, wouldn't matter."

Susy twisted uncomfortably in her chair.

"Of course, it was horrid of them—I'll speak to that boy's mother to-morrow," she began; "but, Tom, that's just what it says about the other cheek, you know."

"I know," he answered briefly. Martin twisted on his ankles; she felt suddenly that they were in a horrid, impalpable league against her.

"It's in the Bible," she murmured, "and that's what he goes there to learn—*she* didn't make it up. . . ."

"Exactly," said Tom dryly, "but Binks doesn't live in the Bible, dear, he lives in this town, and if his spirit is not to be completely broken and his

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

whole boyhood made ridiculous, he must defend himself as every man has to. Good heavens, Susy," he demanded, "am I a bad sort of man? Can't you, can't any decent person, trust me to do the right thing?"

"Of course, Tom!"

"Very well. Do you suppose I'm going to let anybody hit me in the face and not resent it?"

"I—I suppose not, Tom!"

"Then why should anybody teach Martin a thing so eminently idiotic? A thing that wouldn't hold water a minute? A thing that—"

"That's him whistling now!" cried Martin huskily. "You said I could go—can I, now? Can I, father?"

Tom nodded tersely, and they were alone in the room. Susy cried softly against the chair-back.

"To tell your own child to go out and fight a common boy like that!" she moaned. "I think it's horrible, Tom!"

"The case was exceptional," he answered patiently, "and he won't have to do it often, necessarily. I'll attend to Mrs. Singleton—that's all that worries him."

"What *will* she think?" sighed Susy.

Tom stared at his wife a moment, then laughed ironically.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"I don't suppose she ever ran across anybody who took her doctrines so literally," he said at last. "It's not common among church-goers, you must admit, my dear."

Ten minutes passed, and then a grimy, bleeding scarecrow hurried into the room. It was Binks, soiled, but master of his soul.



"He's nine years old, but I licked him!" he crowed shrilly. "I'll bet he don't pinch me any more!"

"Oh, Martin, will you kiss me? Oh, look at your cheek!" Susy cried. "Oh, Tom!"

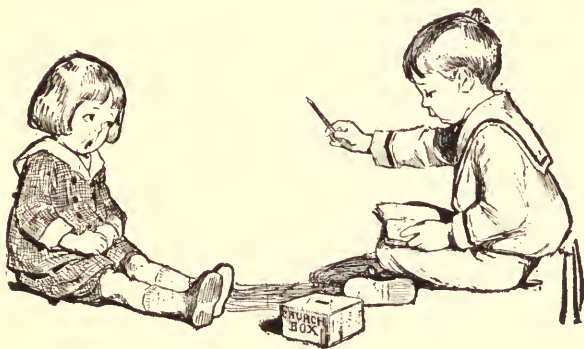
"I'll kiss you after I've washed my face—you wait!" he assured her kindly. "It's pretty

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

bloody, now, for kissing. I'll come back." And he ran out.

But a look passed between the two that did not escape her, and she knew herself for a creature of a different sort, a lesser breed, a riddle to them, as they to her, eternally, inalterably.

"Oh, Tommy, why are men so strange?" she cried bitterly, and buried her face in her husband's shoulder.





VI

WHICH DEALS WITH COUNTRY LIFE IN AMERICA



AFTER this, as is so often the case, since comparative calm seems wont to hover in the wake of great crises, life moved easily and untroubled with the Wilbours. Martin returned with his old-time vigor and delight to his day-school, where his tasks were not yet sufficiently heavy to represent a great expenditure of time or energy, and, contrary to his mother's expectations, he was not plunged into any such alarming series of fisticuffs as Tom's brief consent had seemed to imply. The initial encounter with the bad boy by the pond (from whose presumably enraged parents Susy dreaded retributory visits

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

needlessly) paved the way for a general understanding in our hero's social circle that his widely published vow no longer bound him; and as he was naturally a healthy, plucky little fellow, he soon established his proper rank—the rating, as



he politely explained to his mother, to which his age and size entitled him among his peers. Moreover, he continued to attend the Congregational Sunday-school, and if his allegiance grew a little less vivid, his interest a little more perfunctory, his attitude toward old Mrs. Singleton a shade more critical, all these results may have been, as Tom insisted they were, but the logical results of a situation previously untenable by any reason-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

able standard of measurement, and therefore deserving an early readjustment.

Susy's own attitude toward her first-born had surely, if impalpably, altered slightly with the force of this new development. Hers was a cheery, simple soul, but little disposed to analysis, but she could not fail to perceive that Tom's unusual and decided interference with the family policy had brought about a distinct change in the relationships of their little quartet.

Though she had not definitely put herself on record as approving Mrs. Singleton's extorted pledge, she had ranged herself instinctively, broadly speaking, upon the old lady's side, with a vague feeling that custom, propriety, and certain acknowledged principles of civilization supported them both; and now under Martin's very nose, so to speak, Tom had jerked custom, propriety, and civilization itself from beneath her sex's feet, and arrayed himself with his son against her. She was an honest little creature, and she did not blink the fact that Martin was himself again, fortified by a self-respect which all his teacher's maxims had not been able, evidently, to afford, however abstractly justified they might have been; nor could she forget that Tom's masculine intuition, and not by any means her maternal solicitude, had divined the source of the trouble

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

originally. She had always realized that somehow, some time, Tom must become the court of last resort to his sons; but she had placed that period vaguely in the future, and pictured him arbitrating years hence, amid the mysterious misdemeanors of young men, at which stage she fondly imagined herself as likely to be only too glad to shift the burden of a responsibility so unfamiliar. But to have it happen now! For Binks, whose very curls were hardly cut, to judge her silently, weigh her with that ridiculous old lady, and finding her wanting, gravely assume the prerogatives of his sex and claim comprehensions and traditions that never could be hers!



THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

More than once since, his quiet "I'll speak to father about it" had filled her with a mingled humiliation and pride, and though she still missed him in the school hours that were much longer than the kindergarten's had been, there was an element of relief in his absence.

Bell's devotion and regret were less complicated, and the faithful girl, deprived of so much of her care and business, redoubled her ministrations in the case of Thomas, thus leaving Susy even freer, so that her time, untaxed by the insidious lures of city shopping and city amusements, threatened to hang a little heavy on her hands.

It was then that, to the surprise of all her friends, she developed a hitherto unsuspected taste for those duties and pleasures of country life somewhat loosely classed by city dwellers under the head of "farming," and threw herself into them with an ardor at first amusing, and then somewhat disquieting to Tom, who had been born on a farm, and had not the remotest intention of returning to that environment. In making his way back to the green spaces and clear airs of his boyhood, he had but yielded naturally enough to the call that rarely fails to haunt the man of forty, and would have willingly endured the two hours of railway travel it entailed for the sake of the weekly vacation and the

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

chance of offering a welcome hospitality to his friends. And when to these advantages were added the indubitable gain for his boys, there was no question in his mind as to the desirability of the move, and he had wished to accomplish it at least two years before Susy could bring herself to agree with him. But having at last succeeded, as far as the main outlines of his scheme were concerned, and by a masterly policy of inaction managed to convince Susy that the situation was entirely of her own choosing, Tom was prepared to settle down into the frank status of a commuter, cheerfully suffering the high taxation which insured him good roads, water, and electric light, and disinclined to pursue the question of eggs and milk any further than the local dealers in such produce should make necessary.

The long hours he had passed in boyhood, kneeling disgustedly on a pine board, weeding his uncle's mammoth vegetable garden, had impressed themselves indelibly upon his mind, and even now produced, he assured his wife, such spiritual nausea as to render the mere word "vegetable" a combination of syllables dangerous to utter in his presence; while only the really remarkable cheapness of the spotty cow offered by their neighbor on the occasion of their establishing themselves, and the vouched-for com-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

petence of Myron Plummer in connection with the useful animal, together with a loftful of fodder for her and the horse—which his early experience had taught him was offered at a ridiculously low figure—had induced him to purchase the beast, the very sight of whom (she was a highly personal cow) filled him, as he confided to his family, with unhappy recollections.

“Because,” he added, “I know about ’em, Toots, and you don’t. You know they’re spotted, and you know they went two by two into the Ark, and you know they’re responsible for butter and not eggs; and if you get as far as that, you’re doing well, for a girl that grew up under a lamp-post. But the rest is all poetry, as far as you’re concerned, and I can tell you there’s mighty little poetry about a cow, really. You read in the books how the lowing herd winds slowly o’er the lea, and all that, and you never realize that some poor boy has to wind slowly after ’em—but he does. I did a good deal of winding over Uncle William Wyman’s lea, I can tell you, and it got on my nerves. Just as I was having any luck fishing, or getting anybody’s marbles away from him, or watching the circus get ready for supper, or enjoying a good detective story in the barn, I had to go for those cows. And lug in the milk, too. And churn Saturday mornings for Uncle

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

William's housekeeper. They all thought they might as well get something out of me, because they were bringing me up, you see. When I moved into Greenfield to live with Aunt Em, I was a mighty contented boy, you'd better believe."

"But you won't have to wind slowly after this cow, Tom," Susy reminded him, "Myron Plummer will. And he says she's such a good one."

"I don't doubt her goodness," Mr. Wilbour returned coldly. "A cow as homely as she is might better be good—why not? I am merely suggesting to you that if ever Myron Plummer should be for any reason incapacitated, some one will have to take his place and milk that cow, no matter how virtuous she may be. And the question immediately arises, who will it be?"

"Perhaps Mary knows how," Susy offered hopefully.

"Perhaps she does," her husband admitted, "and perhaps Bell can tune the piano, but I wouldn't bank on either of those propositions if I were you."

"But why should Myron Plummer be incapacitated?" Susy pursued with her usual optimism. "He seems very strong and well to me."

Tom looked thoughtfully about the veranda, where they were sitting at the time, and cleared his throat tentatively.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"I wasn't thinking of his catching the mumps, exactly," he said slowly, "and I don't want to alarm you unnecessarily, Toots, so early in the day. But I was born and brought up with hired men, as you might say, and spent most of my early life, it seemed to me then, doing their work for them, and I had the chance to make an exhaustive study of their methods and characters. Now, as a matter of fact, I never knew a hired man as handy and willing as Myron that didn't drink, at one time or another, more than was good for him. And in the case of a big, husky fellow like him, that means an awful lot."

"Why, Tom," she exclaimed, filled with horror, "how dreadful!"

"Undoubtedly," he agreed, "but I wasn't thinking so much of the moral crisis at this moment as the inconvenience to us. That's why I didn't want to go any farther from the station—I can always walk up, you see."

Susy had sighed thoughtfully, and for some time afterward regarded Myron Plummer with a quite unnecessary mixture of caution and commiseration, which she overcame finally to the extent of requesting him to teach her to harness Fido and apportion his daily rations—a course which amazed the good-natured fellow greatly.

Up to this point the hired man had had little

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY



to do with his mistress. Susy was unaccustomed to men-servants, and her few suggestions as to that part of the ménage outside the house had been carried to Myron by her husband or Bell. She realized vaguely that he was in many ways the mainspring of the little establishment; that the constant small repairs and exigencies of the house called for his handy adjustments and practical common sense a dozen time a day. His jovial guffaw kept the kitchen in shrieks of answering laughter, his immaculate stable, shining carriage, clean cow-shed, and clipped lawn were the admiration of appreciative guests; his shovelled

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

paths and general imperviousness to weather made the winter, with its daily journeys stationward, comparatively easy; and Susy, who for the first year of their exile had spent a large proportion of her time in the city, had occasion to think of him only at those times when mysterious attacks of some unnamed malady had kept him from his duties for two or three consecutive days, and the consequent confusion and scurrying throughout the household, coupled with the uninviting appearance of a helpful friend of the sufferer, borrowed from the livery-stable, had impressed her with a sense of something out of tune and troublesome.

The second year found her tired of the constant travel on the train, inclined to question the value of the amusements it purchased, more and more interested in gathering their friends into pleasant little parties under their gradually strengthening roof-tree; a change which delighted Tom, and kept the chatelaine of the establishment so busy with her picturesque hospitality and its consequent visits to be returned that she ignored, with true American *insouciance*, the details of the very machinery that carried her along.

But the beginning of the third season brought sudden and unforeseen changes, no one of which, probably, could have had much effect on the Wil-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

bour family, whereas taken together and acting on each other, they produced, unrelated and casual though they appeared, a completely different atmosphere, so that in a few weeks the head of the house of Wilbour was rubbing his eyes in amazement, wondering what, in his expressive phraseology, had got into Toots.

And yet what had happened was really very simple and apparently unimportant. Susy, in one of her harnessing lessons, had noticed a strange, hollow cough coming from the stable, and had inquired of Myron Plummer what it might be.

"It's the cow," he answered promptly, "she's been that way for two months now. I told him about it, but he didn't give no orders, and I can't stop her anyway I try. Of course, I don't know how you feel about it, but if 'twas *my* cow I'd see the vet about her. He give forty dollars for her, and she was worth fifty-five any day in the year."

"Dear me," Susy commented, "I didn't know cows coughed."

"No'm," Myron Plummer replied politely, "I s'pose not, but they do. And they can get consumption just as good as you can."

"Heavens!" she cried, "then get the veterinary this moment, Myron—and the children drinking the milk! How awful!"

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"That's the idea," said Myron placidly, "I thought you mightn't like it, but he didn't seem to think it mattered none to speak of—he says the German science-men ain't got it figured out yet that it makes any difference, anyhow, the milk not coming from the lungs, I s'pose; but as I reminded him, she ain't a German cow, and I'd just as soon be on the safe side, myself. It don't sound like no stomach-cough to me—that's all I can say."

The veterinary agreeing with the hired man, the cow was promptly disposed of, and Susy and Myron fared forth upon the search for a new one, as Tom readily agreed that since the distance from the station required a horse, and the horse required a man, the man might as well have his time fully occupied.

"Tell Myron I'll pay fifty," he added hurriedly. "There ought to be plenty of them around, a little way back," and jumped for the moving train, where a friendly bridge-table awaited him and put the incident out of his mind.

But Susy, greatly impressed by the affair, was not inclined to leave it so entirely to another, and herself undertook the expedition "a little way back," returning in triumph with a clumsy, sad-eyed animal selected, she assured her amused husband, largely by her own instinctive apprecia-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

tion of the creature's best points, and only reinforced by Myron Plummer's judgment. As a matter of fact, she had been charmed by the flattering deference to her preferences and opin-



ions expressed by her escort and the interested dairyman, and came back intoxicated with the sense of her practical grasp of a new situation and the consciousness of a wider field of energy

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

and executive power than she had believed herself to possess.

In the swing of this elation she had agreed wisely with Myron in his voluble regret at the sale, which Tom had insisted upon, of the unfortunate cow's daughter. Myron had felt this to be wrong, as he said, all along.

"Just look if we'd 'a' had her now!" he observed didactically. "That would been a good lot o' money saved him, wouldn't it? Two cows is none too much; then when one's no good to you, you have the other, haven't you?"

"No good," Susy repeated vaguely, "you mean when she had a cough?"

"I mean when she had a calf," said Myron bluntly. "If you keep two agoin', you always have the milk o' one."

At this point, as her husband was afterward wont to relate, a great light burst upon Susy, and the cow, in her primarily maternal relation to society, leaped to a place in her estimation never before occupied by that worthy and self-sacrificing beast. Convinced that these important truths had been lost upon Tom hitherto, or at any rate insufficiently appreciated, and struck suddenly by the pathos of the thought that a hired servant was more considerate of her husband's income than she had been, Susy, elated

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

by her share in the recent purchase, rose to a new conception of her responsibilities and addressed Myron Plummer firmly.

"Wasn't there a calf with the new cow?" she demanded.

"Yes'm, there was," he answered with alacrity, "and a shame to leave it, too, Mis' Wilbour! We've got a plenty o' pasture for 'em both, and when you raise a calf yourself you know what milk you're gettin', I always say."

"I'll buy the calf this afternoon," said Susy, and from that moment her career as a landed proprietor began.

A few days later, Tom, who came home much exasperated, as were all the surrounding neighbors, by rumors of an intended baseball-ground and amusement park in the curve of the great post-road which ran behind their little property, was much surprised to find that Susy, never in the least interested in rural affairs, was quite as well informed of the project as he, and equally indignant at it, so that his tentative proposition to join with a number of others in buying various parcels of the land in question as a protective measure met with her hearty approval.

"And then we'd have more pasture if we should need it," she added, a remark which struck

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

him as odd at the time, though the importance of it escaped him utterly.

As a matter of fact, there was every reason for regarding the purchase as a good investment, aside from its first intention, and as such Tom was content to consider it; but Myron Plummer had other and wider plans, and Tom, all unprepared for them, was in no position to combat the united persistence of the two when Susy laid before him their scheme of a vegetable garden really worthy of the house of Wilbour.

“Of course, as Myron says,” she proceeded volubly, “it’s not really worth a man’s while puttering with a little patch like that in the back-yard, Tom. A little parsley and lettuce, and three tomato-plants—what are they when you really come down to it? And even that, as he says, he had to fight hard enough to get. But the boys eat so much now, and there’s no corn like your own corn—everybody says that. Myron says that in the place where he was before he came here they grew the biggest lima beans in the State and got a prize for them. He says two or three days with a team would get that new piece into great shape—it’s fine soil. And then we could have beet-tops—you’re so fond of them, and they simply don’t grow them about here, you know.”

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"Beet-tops, as I've explained to you before," Tom interrupted patiently, "are only the tops of beets."

"I know; but if they won't cut them the way you want them, you might as well say they don't grow them—like crown-roasts of lamb at the butcher's, you know," Susy explained. "And that Mrs. Hirschmann, on the lower road, sells enough lettuce to pay for her—"

"My *dear* Toots!"

Mr. Wilbour clasped his hands dramatically, and an expression of real terror checked her further arguments.

"If Myron thinks he can manage the garden, all right—if you really want it," he assured her. "But don't, *don't*, I beg and beseech of you, Toots, let yourself be led by him or anybody else into the frightful error of imagining for an instant that you can pay for anything you put into a garden by anything you sell out of it."

"But Mrs. Hirschmann—"

He took her hand pityingly, and spoke in the soothing tone dedicated to fractious patients.

"My dear girl," he began, eying her firmly, "do you realize that that little Jew has I don't know how many acres under cultivation, two big greenhouses, and a grapery? I couldn't say how many men he employs all the year 'round, but

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

it must be a dozen, at least, judging by the list of names he tried to ring in on us as voters in that road-repair business. Now if it amuses his wife to send her extra lettuce to market (in a sixty-horse-power Panhard) can you look me in the face and say that she is 'paying for' anything with the proceeds? Why, they wouldn't buy gasoline for the trip!"

Susy lowered her head a little and pushed out her lip—a sign that caused her husband to shudder.

"But, Tom dear," she replied gently, "I never said she pretended to pay for her gasoline—who would suppose so? All she pretends to pay is the expenses of her own table lettuce!"

Tom blinked a few moments, swallowed hard, drew a long breath, and kissed her warmly—a proceeding which would have indicated clearly to any possible onlooker that years of married life had not passed over him in vain.

"God bless you, Toots," he said politely, "no reasonable woman could be half so pleasant to live with—I must get my train!"

From that day forth Tom saw little of Myron Plummer, whose allegiance was wholly transferred to his mistress. Susy, who had never dreamed that such a thing could interest her, spent long afternoons with Thomas by her side

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

on the old pasture wall, watching the successive stages of ploughing, stoning, fencing, and fertilizing; while Martin rode proudly behind the team or brought nails and wire at the endless demand of the two picturesque Italians who had become necessary fixtures on the estate, since the fencing could not be pushed too rapidly, because of the neighboring cattle and horses pastured around the garden. Myron's corn-patch and the good-sized plot he requisitioned for potatoes seemed enormously larger, viewed as fencable area, than they had at first appeared; and poor Susy's face, when the bills for woven wire, nails, hinges, picks, shovels, and fence-posts came in, was so unaffectedly miserable that her husband was forced to make light of it, in very humanity. Nevertheless, she held long consultations on the subject with Myron Plummer, and was greatly relieved at the honest fellow's suggestion that he should "take them two Dagoes and go off and cut fence-poles in Hollis's swamp."

Mr. Hollis, it appeared, was anxious to have his swamp cleared and drained, and the posts were to be had for the merest fraction of the cost of the first lot, so that Susy added the cheerful sense of accomplishing a business-like stroke of economy to the new list of experiences, and began to read the articles on "Intensive Farming" in the

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

country and garden magazines with an almost professional interest.

"It's awfully silly, as Myron says, Tom," she explained, "to be paying out good money for bought fence-posts when we really live in the country and have only to cut them. And Myron isn't afraid of work."

"N-no," Tom replied thoughtfully, "I never said that he was. He's not afraid of working the Italians, either, is he? He said he'd only need them five days this week, and now it will certainly take him all next week to get that garden ready."

"But, Tom, they were getting the fence-posts—it isn't the garden, really."

"But, my dear child, if we can't have a garden without fence-posts, then the fence-posts are part of the garden, aren't they?"

"I suppose so," she murmured doubtfully.

"And I have always told Myron it was too far away, anyhow—he'll have to carry all the stuff himself, you know. It will mean extra help in the spring, always."

"Yes; but now that he got that old farm-wagon so cheap—"

"My dear girl, if you're going into this, you might as well go with your eyes open! It's true the wagon *was* cheap, but have you seen the bill for repairing it? And do you realize that he

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

broke the entire underpinning of the phaeton with all that woven-wire fencing that they tried to haul in it before we got the wagon? And the vet's been here twice for Fido for his knee—the first time since we came out here, you know. And I doubt if the phaeton has been properly cleaned since the garden was started. I certainly saw that same smudge of butter on it—”

“I am so disappointed about the butter, Tom,” Susy interrupted, “everybody says we ought to have our own butter with a good cow, but really I don't see how we can, and cream enough, too. Myron says it's one of those big pails twice a day, but Mary says it's all froth, and he wouldn't want the top of the bucket for *his* share! If you want ice-cream, I believe you must have two cows, myself. And yet nobody says so. I wonder why?”

“Because they wouldn't get paid for writing about it if they did,” Tom assured her promptly. “That's why. Don't you know that those crazy magazines with goldenrod and sail-boats on the covers have to make money, child? They have to have butter, too. And how do they get it—from the money *you* pay? Not much. They get it from those advertisements you're so fond of reading to me evenings. And what do you suppose those advertisers pay for space for? To

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

catch farmers? Hardly. Farmers wouldn't be farmers if they could afford to try those things—not much. They're to catch you, my dear. And what makes you so easy? Why, because you think it's an easy game, that's all."

"But, Tom dear, that man that writes every month about how his place is doing in *Homes and Gardens of America* is only a beginner, and he isn't rich at all. And he has four children. And he simply used his common sense, he says, and the children sold a hundred dollars' worth of early vegetables this spring from their own greenhouse that they just ran up when they added the sun parlor that they use for a living-room."

"‘Just ran up,’ is good," Tom commented sardonically. "He's a genius, that fellow. Is he the one that made over the five-room farm-house and built a new stable and sun parlor for eleven hundred dollars?"

Susy nodded.

"Ah, here he is!" And Tom reached for *Homes and Gardens of America*, which opened readily at a marked page, from which he read, following the marked paragraphs carefully:

"We decided that it was poor economy to invest in a scrub cow, as the best always pays in the end, so purchased a good one. Our small lot is ample

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

pasturage for her, and she well rewards the care and petting of our youngest boy, whose especial charge she has grown to be, by providing us with a generous abundance of milk, cream, butter, and pot-cheese, besides skim-milk for the pigs (cared for by the second daughter) and milk to sell, which has already paid for our churn, ice-cream freezer, and milk pans, pails, etc. My wife takes entire care of the milk, and considers that her great gain in health is largely due to this simple and pleasurable task.

“Well, well, it’s the same old cow—I suppose the reason you never meet her in real life is because the books buy up the supply so constantly,” he philosophized. “That’s the kind to have; there’s no doubt about it, Toots. All summer she lives on the front-yard, and in the winter they feed her on the old magazine covers, I suppose, for I never read of her eating anything else, certainly! She just smiles and hands out milk, cream, butter, and eggs—well, perhaps not eggs quite yet, but that’s merely an oversight on Burbank’s part—all the year round, and she does it from generation to generation, as the choir says, besides. I tell you, there’s no eight-hour day for that cow! And I notice she does more every year—some contributors, seeking the country life for health and leisure, will have her running the sewing-machine soon and living in a

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

window-box on Sixth Avenue—eating the old geraniums and extra Boston ivy!"

"Tommy!"

"That's all right, my dear, but you'll see that in print yet, mark my words." And Tom, who had talked himself into good humor, drew out his fountain-pen and cheerfully signed the check for a totally unexpected bill relative to the hire of a team and wagon for transporting fence-posts from Hollis's swamp to estate of Mr. Thomas B. Wilbour.

"But of all the things that cow will do, you can bank on one she'll never, never be guilty of," he added, stepping out for a session with Myron over the ever-increasing stable-bills, "she'll never eat feed in the winter—never! If there's one thing the magazine cow loathes and detests, it's winter fodder: *she* knows what it costs!"

Susy laughed, and abandoned the contest till such time, she promised herself, as the garden expenses should relax a little; but her faith in Myron tottered slightly when, on the occasion of her explaining somewhat loftily to him that Tom's unfounded but persistent fears of financial deficit precluded many cows in winter, the volatile hired man shifted his ground, scratched his head, and remarked, placidly, that there was a good deal in that idea, and that plenty o' people sold off every

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

fall and bought in the spring on precisely that account.

"But, Myron, you said that there was nothing like knowing your stock and bringing it up!" she chided him.

"And that's true, Mis' Wilbour, it certainly is," he agreed, with conviction; "there's nothing like it, as far as 't goes. Then you know about your milk."

"You know what it costs, too, Mr. Wilbour says," Susy remarked coldly, vexed at her ally's slipperiness.

"Haw! haw! haw!" he roared. "That's so, all right, too! He knows a thing or two, the Boss does."

With a confused idea that life grew more complicated and contradictory as one advanced further into its deceiving depths, Susy left the stable with a slow and thoughtful step, and brightened only at the comforting recollection of her two black pigs safely penned below the garden. Truly these humble friends could not, by any means, be justly entered on that dreadful column of figures to which Tom added so remorselessly, even as he smiled! To begin with, they were a free gift from a grateful country-woman for whom Susy, with one of her generous impulses, had trimmed a hat in imitation of one of her own, much ad-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

mired by the faded, languid farmer's wife. They had appeared, squealing and resentful, in the back of her old farm-wagon, and Myron Plummer had made them a pen near the new garden and approved of them highly. Martin and Thomas spent happy hours hanging over the rough board fence, scratching their backs, feeding them summer apples and cookies, and dreaming fondly of the day when Hamlet, the larger and more aggressive, might be harnessed to the useless, shiny goat-cart. In an evil hour Aunt Emma had written the boys a letter describing a tame pig of her childhood which had dragged a small express-wagon, and Martin, undeterred by the essentially irritable nature displayed by Hamlet from the first, never ceased to hope that gratitude for the cookies and apples would one day soften his hard heart, and lead him to regard the cart with co-operative zeal.

Hamlet and Ophelia grew daily more imposing, and as the garden yielded exceptionally well, considering the lateness of its planting, and the little calf promised to rival her mother in good qualities, Susy felt her rural interests to be more than justified, and confided to Mary, the cook, her newest and most cherished plan for killing the parent pigs in the autumn, saving two out of the future litter of piglets, selling the rest, and



HAMLET AND OPHELIA SAFELY PENNED IN THE GARDEN

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

packing away hams and sausage for the winter, after the enthusiastic directions of a school friend in Connecticut, once derided for her barnyard interests, but now eagerly consulted. Mary, around whose childhood cabin in the old country the pigs had sprung up almost indigenously, found nothing unusual or impractical in this plan, and her mistress, delighted with this good-natured acquiescence, promised her a small pig to send to her brother-in-law in Harlem. Aunt Emma, who was as pleased as surprised at this turn in Susy's affairs, agreed with delight to come and assist at the sausage-making, and offered to purchase the best of the litter for a Thanksgiving treat for her old rector in New York; while Susy's married sister engaged two piglings immediately, and planned a Thanksgiving family reunion on the strength of exhibiting the interesting products of the Wilbour farm.

"And if we have one (with a lemon in his mouth) instead of a turkey, Tom, and I count the price of it (or shall I count the price of the turkey?—I never understand about that sort of thing) and add Aunt Emma's and sister's two, and send one to be raffled at the Girl's Friendly sale instead of the three dollars' worth of wool that I usually buy for an afghan—and then can't I count in the time I *would* have spent on the

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

afghan, Tom?—perhaps you'll admit that it does pay!" she urged breathlessly.

"If they don't go back on their bargains, and if they pay the express, and if you don't steal Myron's time to attend to it (it's an awful job, Toots, and, I warn you, you're crazy to think of it: do you know how they squeal? You have to have a big kettle and a whole paraphernalia, you know—are you going to buy it?) why, then, I admit it's all right," he answered doubtfully, "except that it's a little red apple you put in their mouth—not a lemon at all."

"How absurd! We always had—"

"Now, Susy, any one who can't tell a cruller from a doughnut is incapable, on the face of it, of judging in any such matter as this," he reproved her gravely. "Connecticut is just full and running over with these misapprehensions, and it's no more than I should expect from you—not a bit! But I can't have the children's minds poisoned: if we have the pig, it must be a red apple."

But the summer waxed, and seemed in danger of waning, without the expected pigs, and they existed in Susy's neat blue leather account-book alone; though Brinkerhoffs unnumbered vowed to attend the Thanksgiving banquet, and Mrs. Wilbour's unique contribution to the Girl's

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

Friendly sale stirred up such an interest in the proposed raffle that the curate of her old parish took the matter to heart and actually preached a moving sermon against the practice at an unusually well-attended evening service, so that the suburb where most of her girlhood had been passed was brought to a pitch of real excitement, and the ladies of the various church organizations, all of which counted to a greater or less extent upon their annual fêtes and sales, formed bitter factions for and against the gambling system brought into such unclerical prominence by the yet invisible offspring of the unconscious Ophelia.

Susy would have undoubtedly before this discussed her plans with Myron Plummer but for two reasons: in the first place, she considered the hired man to be greatly in need of discipline for what she began to believe to be his deceptive course of action in regard to the garden. Having gained this wish of his heart, he had practically deserted the house and stable except for the most necessary "chores": the phaeton no longer glistened like the sun; the lawn grew rank and weedy; cousin Albert, who had begun under persistent starvation and hard work at hauling stone in a stone-boat in the new pasture, to approximate the meekness of spirit necessary for a children's pet, was ruthlessly torn from them at this most in-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

teresting step and kept at hard labor in the garden; the Italian was found increasingly necessary as window-washer, disposer of garbage, and deputy performer of odd jobs; and altogether Tom's many prophecies seemed so nearly in danger of fulfilment that Susy somewhat illogically chose to consider Myron unworthy her confidence. She quite forgot for a while that unless she could enlist his sympathy and practical superintendence in the disposal of so many porklings (for by August all of her friends were bidding furiously against each other for headcheese, pickled trotters, Brinkerhoff-recipe sausages, and pink baby roasters) the extra labor involved would certainly eat into the profits to an alarming extent, and it was only the gradual realization of this that led her to swallow her pride and seek him out with a view to eliciting his opinion as to when she ought to expect to be able to fulfil her pledges.

But, and this was the second reason for her delay, it was becoming increasingly difficult to see Myron at all. He was either buried in his garden or at his meals or asleep, and any one of these occupations was understood, by a subtle but perfectly definite system of rules, to shroud him in privacy and immunity from disturbance. Tom laughed scornfully when these rules were re-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

ferred to, but had never been observed to break them, and Bell, the usual messenger, had distinctly refused to infringe in the slightest degree upon the system; so that it was only at the pathetic request of the Little Sisters of St. Agnes that they might be put in a position to name the date of their autumn bazaar, now unduly advertised because of the triumphantly sustained pig-affle, that Susy made a definite appointment with her hired man, and in consideration of allowing the Italian deputy to harness Fido and drive Tom to the station, was at length enabled to meet him, very appropriately, by the pig-sty.

It occurred to her that Myron had distinctly deteriorated. His blue jumpers were stained and torn, his old shoes tied together with twine, his beard was stubbly, and he smelled, among other things, of beer. Moreover, he did not seem so anxious to please her as he had been wont, and her plan of remarking on the untidiness of the stable and the unprecedented requirements in the way of garden implements faded into an attitude of positive conciliation, in view of the extra labor soon to be his.

"I wanted to know what you thought of the pigs, Myron," she began, indicating Hamlet and Orphelia, who rooted morosely in the mucky

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

depths, turning over bits of lemon peel and peach pits scornfully, and refusing the least appearance of interest in their proprietress.

"Them pigs? They're doin' well enough, as far as I can see," returned Myron Plummer shortly. "Those late potatoes 'll never come up in the world, unless he'll let me rig up a pump from Hollis's brook, an'—"

"Yes, I know; but I wanted to talk about the pigs, Myron. You know Mr. Wilbour has hardly seen them since they came, and I must take all the responsibility."

"There ain't much responsibility to pigs but takin' their swill to 'em," he observed, "an' they get that regular, though it's a good deal to ask of one man, with a horse an' garden to attend to."

Susy repressed a number of possible replies, and continued sweetly:

"But why don't they have any little pigs, Myron? Miss Emma says it is time they did, and I've promised her one. And several other people, too."

"You promised Miss Emma a pig from *them*?" he demanded, staring at her, roused from his apathy at last.

"Yes, my friend in Connecticut told me they never had less than—"

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"They'll never have none," he assured her briefly.

"None? Why, Myron, what do you suppose I took them for and bought all that feed in the spring?"

"I dunno. You never told *me* you were lookin' for any," he said sullenly.

"But—but—why, I thought if you had a pair of pigs, they always had other pigs!" Susy cried faintly.

Myron spat forth a stream of tobacco, and smiled coldly.

"So they do, but not when they're brothers, as a gen'ral thing," he said briefly; "you'd orter 'a' mentioned it before, I sh'd 'a' thought."

"Have they always been—I mean, did you always know . . ." Susy sighed helplessly.

"I guess they hain't changed much, Miss Wilbour, sence they come," he remarked, and the contempt in his tone, though unveiled,



THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

seemed to poor Susy only just, and she watched him turn on his heel without a murmur.

“Only, how shall I ever tell the Little Sisters of St. Agnes?” she wailed softly — “and Tom!”



VII

WHICH DEALS WITH OUR COMMON NEIGHBORS AND HOW TO KNOW THEM

SUSY turned sadly from the unconscious and misnamed Ophelia, an angry flush growing deeper and deeper in her cheeks as the humiliating truth of her position grew clearer and clearer to her.

“Horrid thing!” she murmured impatiently; “what difference would it have made to her *which* she was, anyway! I’ll just have to buy the St. Agnes girls a pig, now. But Sis and Aunt Emma—oh, what *shall* I do? Sis will tell everybody; I know she will!”

“Does he want I sh’d keep on feedin’ all the stock with oats?”

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

A gloomy and somewhat argumentative voice at her elbow startled her.

"Oats? Oats?" she repeated vaguely.

"There's five head o' stock into that pasture now, and no rain for three weeks," Myron went on sourly. "*I d'no* what to give 'em, if not oats. 'Taint enough pasture, anyhow you look at it. But he kicks at the feed-bills, and I got t' get some more bags t'-day. *I d'no* what he thinks they're goin' to live on. That goat eats enough for two."

"We should never have kept that goat," Susy said with dignity, "but since we did so, he must be fed, of course."

"Oh, all right—it don't make no difference to me," Myron replied; "it's yours an' his business. But I jist thought I'd speak of it, since oats is gone up, anyhow. It would 'a' paid to 'a' had more pasture."

"But we bought all that land, Myron," she reminded him.

"You bought fer the garden *an'* pasture," he returned implacably, "and now he won't fence in but the garden, really, 'cause that bit o' pasture ain't anything to call pasture, you might say. An' I needed more for corn, anyhow."

"But, Myron, how could we possibly use any more corn?"

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"It's just as well to plant a little more as not to," he persisted, chewing a straw obstinately, "and anybody 'll tell ye so. If you're going to have a garden, y' might's well *have* one."

Susy walked away from him in silence, too vexed and discouraged for any further discussion.

"I am very much disappointed in Myron Plummer," she confided to Drabble and Lappy, who by dint of stolidly attaching themselves to her and following her everywhere had succeeded in winning a grudging but definite place in her affection. "I can't think why I used to like him so much—he's perfectly horrid."

She walked up from the stable, slowly, because of the heat, passing carelessly under the pergola, a white-pillared reality now, with its vines well started—once the chief pride of her soul, but less interesting, somehow, now that it was a fact accomplished. Along the quaint path of "herring-boned" red brick, by the sweet-peas, fragrant on their neat brush screen, past the flowery nasturtiums, crawling like smoldering fire over the bit of old stone wall that Tom had cleverly kept standing for them, the mistress of all this warm bloom and well-kept sweetness walked dispiritedly.

"Some one will have to pick all those flowers," she complained softly to the spotty dogs, "and we were so afraid they wouldn't grow, once!"

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

Drabble and Lappy sniffed suddenly and growled a little. A strange dog—a Boston bull pup—was sitting on the broad veranda steps regarding them with the cynical malevolence peculiar to that species.

“Whose dog are you? (Be still, Drabble—get down, Lappy!) Somebody must have come,” she murmured, not too hospitably, and, calling to Martin to keep the peace on the veranda, slipped in by the side porch for a furtive glance at her hair in the sideboard mirror.

On the threshold of the dining-room she paused in amazement. Across the room, on his knees before a corner cupboard of mahogany, from whose open doors poured a river of blue-and-white china, there squatted a plump gentleman whose back, at least, was entirely unknown to her. Though not to be called fat, he verged, nevertheless, on plumpness, and as he delved busily among the platters and ginger-jars in the lower half of the corner cupboard he puffed audibly. His hat lay beside him; seen from the rear, he exhibited all the attitudes of some celebrant of a strange religious ceremony.

For a moment Susy trembled, her throat contracted for a scream, her legs bent for flight; but even as she wavered in the doorway it occurred to her that it was not the course of a sneak-thief

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

to establish a palpably strange bull pup at the front door of the house of his selection, nor to pitch upon the middle of a warm summer afternoon to look over old china in a suburban dining-room. The cheerful clatter in the kitchen behind her, the bright sunshine all about her, strengthened her nerves, and, advancing a few steps, she clinched her hands securely and addressed the kneeling stranger with a fair degree of firmness.

"What are you doing there? Who are you?" she demanded.

The man hitched about awkwardly on his knees, disclosing a pair of brown, short-sighted eyes behind nose-glasses, a roundish, clever face, and a smooth-shaven, combative chin.

"He looks like the bulldog!" Susy thought parenthetically.

"Are you Mrs. T. B. Wilbour?" he asked in a crisp, hectoring voice, quite as if he expected to bring his hostess to book and rather enjoyed the job. "I've been waiting over an hour, and as my time is fairly valuable, I decided to lose no more of it."

"I am Mrs. Wilbour, yes," Susy answered coldly. "May I ask what you are doing with my china?"

The man laughed abruptly; not in the least a pleasant or a humorous laugh, but such a laugh

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY



as may be heard almost any night in the theatre when intense and biting irony must be conveyed to the farthest seats in the topmost gallery.

"Very good!" he exclaimed, "very good, indeed! Ha, ha!"

Then, as she stared at him in unconcealed sur-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

prise, he spoke again, still kneeling, and meeting her eye with an intentional firmness which seemed, somehow, to put her curiously in the wrong.

"When I tell you that my name is Carmichael, M. Carmichael," he said with meaning, "you may possibly find yourself enlightened, madam."

Susy shook her head vaguely, in such unmistakable stupidity and sincerity that the man pointed a small willowware tea-cup reprovingly at her in his irritation.

"Come, come!" he cried, "do you mean to say that the name Carmichael conveys no association to your mind?"

Across Susy's memory flashed the old rhyme:

"There was Mary Seaton and Mary Beaton,
And Mary Carmichael and me—"

She would have ceased to be Susan Wilbour had she not giggled suddenly at the idea.

But this little bubble of laughter proved too much for her guest's self-control.

"Ah!" he snapped out angrily, "I see you *do* remember, after all! Now perhaps you will tell me what you have done with my furniture, madam!"

"Your furniture?"

Susy tried to be serious, but the effort was too great, the little, irritable man too funny. It was quite evident that he was not crazy—he was, as

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

she expressed it afterward, just like anybody else, only crosser. A more imaginative woman would undoubtedly have begun to consider the possibility, at least, of being frightened, but Susy was not given to fearing the worst, and her instinct assured her that the extraordinary gentleman now on his knees before her was as sane as herself.

"I haven't the least idea what you are talking about," she said at length, choking back another hysterical giggle—"the only furniture we have is our own."

"Indeed!" he returned ironically. "Then where have you disposed of what you found in my house when you moved into it three years ago, may I ask?"

Susy's face fell; a conscious blush rose slowly to her forehead.

"Why—are you the—were you the—was it you that—"

Mr. Carmichael rose triumphantly from his knees and dusted them with marked neatness.

"My family has owned that farm for three generations," he said. "This property originally belonged to them, too."

Susy glanced hastily around as if expecting to find *M. Carmichael* written on the walls.

"But—but the liveryman told us a Mrs. Brundage lived there," she began hesitatingly. "We

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

wrote to her, but it came back from the dead-letter office."

"She was in Australia," said Mr. Carmichael. "She died there last year. Mrs. Brundage was my old nurse, and lived in my house during the three years my family and I spent in Europe. She was a very worthy woman," he continued severely, "but unbusinesslike, I am sorry to say, and we did not learn till last year that she had left to join her son in New South Wales. The liveryman is a new-comer here; anybody else could have told you who owned the Carmichael place."

"Er—won't you sit down?" Susy suggested uncomfortably. "I—we were sorry about the furniture, but it couldn't be helped very well. We described the place carefully to the man that moved us, and then when we got here it was wrong. I'm afraid he *was* rather rough with them—he was vexed to find so much more than my husband told him there would be—we wrote and offered to do anything we could, but most of the things were so old—"

"Old!" Mr. Carmichael exclaimed angrily, "I should say they were old, indeed! That was family furniture, madam—heirlooms! Absolutely unreplaceable, much of it. And do I understand that it has been destroyed?"

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"Not at all," said Susy with dignity, a disgusted recollection of the bamboo easel and the Rogers' group, not to speak of *Niagara by Moonlight*, hardening her heart—"not at all, Mr. Carmichael. We put back everything. As soon as we found that they had moved us wrong—"

"Moved you wrong!" he interrupted irascibly. "What an absurd affair! And where were you, pray, while the moving was going on? You were there, I suppose? You knew it was not the farm you had bought?"

"I—we—they didn't require . . . I was at *Buffalo Bill!*" she explained shamefacedly.

"*Buffalo Bill!*" he cried furiously. "Why, in the name of everything sensible, were you at *Buffalo Bill* when you were moving?"

"They were exceptional movers," poor Susy murmured.

"So it appears," he said acidly. "They evidently moved my furniture very thoroughly. It is only fair to inform you, Mrs. Wilbour, that I shall bring suit for damages immediately. Though I no longer believe that you disposed of the furniture yourselves," he added abruptly—"I have been over the house sufficiently."

Susy swallowed hard.

"I am not in the habit of stealing furniture," she said with what she hoped was dignity, "but

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

if I were, Mr. Carmichael, I shouldn't begin with what we found in the Brundage house, I assure you. They may be valuable to you, but I'm afraid very few people will agree with you. I think my husband still has the letter the moving people wrote him when he told them they would be responsible for any damage to the things they threw out into the barn. They said that they were perfectly willing to be responsible for their own mistake, but that, as far as damage went, those were hard things to damage. That bamboo easel, for instance, was very shaky before—"

"Bamboo easel!" cried Mr. Carmichael furiously—"bamboo grandmother!"

Susy started backward; the man literally jumped at her. But even in his excitement she observed that he carefully jumped over the blue-and-white china.

"That hideous truck is none of it mine, madam—as you know perfectly well!" he stormed. "Where is my furniture? Where is the Carmichael sideboard? Where are the Moreland prints? Where is the hall seat?"

"Do you mean that—that the things weren't yours?" Susy asked wonderingly. "Whose were they, then?"

The little man spun around, on the tips of his toes, literally, with rage.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

“Good God!” he spluttered, “do you suppose that I know whose they are, if *you* don’t? I never saw such horrors in my life! I suppose you’d say next that that picture of *Niagara by Moonlight* is mine!”

“It certainly isn’t ours,” Susy returned with some irritation, “and I don’t know why you should take it for granted that we know anything about it, anyhow. Everything was moved back exactly where it was found—my nurse has a very good memory, and she superintended it—as soon as we discovered that we were in the wrong house. I moved a great many of the things myself, so I know. I never saw them before or since—I’m happy to say,” she added viciously.

Mr. Carmichael grasped his hair with both hands, just as Signor Caruso does when operatic exigencies drive him to despair. Susy felt really sorry for him.

“Bell!” she called, stepping to the door (and the rapidity with which the faithful girl appeared indicated her interest in the situation), “will you please explain to this gentleman what sort of furniture you found in the Brundage house when we moved there?”

“You mean them grayish sort of portraits of the old gentleman and lady, Mrs. Wilbour, and the jointed yellow chairs that was broke, and the

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

waterfall that Mr. Wilbour thought looked better sideways, and—”

“There, there—that’s enough!” said Mr. Carmichael nervously. “Do you mean to tell me that there was no Chippendale sideboard in the dining-room?”

“All the things were chipped,” Bell replied promptly. “I passed the remark to the old man that was moving—he complained a good deal of what was there—that it was no wonder the folks didn’t care what become of them. That group of statuary, now, that was sort of light-brown color, with the lady and the baby and the boy with the basket, that was ’specially nicked. If Mr. Brundage thinks we nicked it, he’s mistaken.” And she looked coldly at the heap of china on the floor.

“There is no Mr. Brundage,” their visitor informed her gloomily, “he died before you were born. And I wish that infernal Rogers group had smashed before I laid my eyes on it!”

Bell looked inquiringly at her mistress, and Susy began to explain, while Mr. Carmichael sank into Tom’s carving-chair, his head in his hands.

“This gentleman is Mr. Carmichael, Bell, and Mrs. Brundage was his old nurse. But she went to Australia, and—and now he can’t find his things,” Susy ended, none too lucidly, but with a firm trust in Bell’s comprehension.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"Then maybe the nurse took 'em to Australia," Bell suggested promptly.

Susy glanced hopefully at Mr. Carmichael, but he only shook his head impatiently.

"Nonsense!" he said shortly. "In the first place, she wouldn't want them. In the second place, she was devoted to us, and she knew how we valued them. She was put in the house as caretaker. In the third place, I happen to know what she took to Australia, for I sent on her things myself. Before we left, I had her store all her property in the barn, and when we got the letter last year that she had started suddenly, on the news of her brother's wife's death there, and never expected to come back, I wrote to a New York firm and had them pack all her stuff and send it out after her. I know that she took nothing but a steamer-trunk, for the postmaster told me so; and I know that everything was cleaned out of the barn, because the bill was very large—but the man gave it especial care, he said, and packed all the large pieces separately. I have his receipts and the freight-receipts from Australia. His name was Slide."

"Of Slide & Bumpus?" Susy cried breathlessly.

"Why, yes, I believe that was the firm," said Mr. Carmichael.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"It was Mr. Bumpus that moved us!" she gasped. "Isn't that strange!"

"It's all strange," he agreed wearily, "all very strange, indeed! Everybody seems very business-like and clear from blame—but *where is my furniture?* Brundage got hers, you have yours; I have proof that Slide only took out of the town what corresponds to the freight-receipts. What became of mine? Who brought all that rickety lumber and stuck it about in my house?"

He looked helplessly from one to the other, but they could only shake their heads.

"Did you write to Mrs. Brundage?" Bell asked at length.

"The poor old lady never read it," he answered; "she died very soon after she got there. But her brother wrote me a very good letter, thanking me for the things, which came in very useful, he said. So I know they got theirs. I took the entire charge of them, you see. They filled the barn, nearly, Slide wrote me. Brundage left her well off, I suppose."

Bell put the end of her apron into her mouth and chewed it vigorously, a habit which always accompanied unusual mental excitement with her.

"Would that brother know what her things looked like?" she demanded.

"I don't know . . . he hardly could, though, for

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

he moved to New South Wales when he was a mere lad, now I think of it, long before Brundage married," Mr. Carmichael replied, far from resenting this catechism it seemed, and only grateful, apparently, for the interest it implied.

"Then do you know what I think?" Bell burst out, cramming quite an appreciable proportion of her apron into her mouth, and articulating with a corresponding elocutionary effect.

"No. What?" Mr. Carmichael responded dully. He seemed beyond theorizing himself, so dazed had the facts left him.

"I believe," Bell announced triumphantly, "that Mrs. Brundage was living with her own furniture all along, and stored your things in the barn, unbeknown to you, and that it was them you had boxed and sent to the brother! And if she left hurried, she never had time to change 'em! And the brother never knew!"

"And these things are hers!" Susy added eagerly, "the crayons and *Niagara* and the bamboo chairs."

Mr. Carmichael stared at Bell as at an oracle; his short-sighted eyes positively started from their sockets.

"Then my furniture—my sideboard—my hall seat—my Morlands—are in Australia!" he moaned.

"I'll bet you a dollar they are!" the nurse an-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

swered, pursing her lips—from which she removed the apron—firmly.

“Heavens above!” said Mr. Carmichael.

The two women maintained a sympathetic silence; even Bell’s loquacity failed before such misfortune. The very sounds from the kitchen had ceased, and they regarded each other in the midst of an unnatural quiet, which was broken suddenly by the irritable bleat of Mildred, tethered near the house for the purpose of cropping the lower lawn. As the goat’s flat, discontented cry shivered across to them, Mr. Carmichael drew his hand over his forehead.

“Brundage has a sheep-ranch in Australia,” he remarked bitterly. “Perhaps he keeps the wool in my carved oak wedding-chests!”

They shook their heads respectfully, and again silence fell. Now a gentle rattling was heard and the crack of a whip, and presently a loud, long bray announced that Cousin Albert was at the kitchen door with his load of vegetables from the garden. Mr. Carmichael drew a heavy, sighing breath.

“Poor old Brundage!” he said sadly. “She used to drive me in a donkey-cart.”

It occurred to Susy that the associations of their home were not likely, at this rate, to raise their guest’s spirits, and she began to pick up

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

the china briskly, motioning Bell, whose sympathetic nature was fast sinking into gloom, to help her.

"Of course, you know, Mr. Carmichael, Bell's idea may be entirely wrong," she began, "and your things may be somewhere else. We can't be sure."

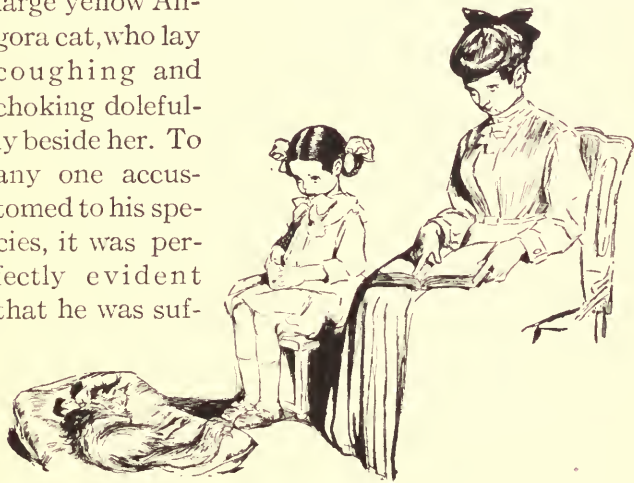
"My dear Mrs. Wilbour," he said solemnly, "there is no more doubt in my mind at this moment as to the whereabouts of that furniture than—than—oh, well, there's no doubt about it at all! That's why Slide wrote that the pieces were heavy and difficult to crate—of course they were! There were four pine-apple beds and an enormous mahogany dining-table. Those wedding-chests alone— Well, well, I must get right back and tell Mrs. Carmichael. She'll feel terribly—terribly. I really don't know how she'll take it—she's not as self-possessed as I am, you know—not nearly! More excitable. Dear, dear, dear!"

He bustled about the room nervously, alternately clapping his straw hat on his head and removing it, while the two women watched him curiously. It seemed, somehow, that they had known Mr. Carmichael a long time.

Nor did this impression fade on making the further acquaintance of his family. Mrs. Carmichael was a merry, bird-like little person, equal-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

ly at home in lodgings in Vienna, a house-boat on the Hudson, an Adirondack camp, or a country farm-house. Their little daughter Ursula had lived in all these places, and of her six years no two had been passed in the same surroundings. She, like her mother, was an ardent Christian Scientist, and was first seen by Tom and Susy on the occasion of their initial call gravely spelling out from the somewhat cryptic volume of that faith dark sentences directed to the healing of a large yellow Angora cat, who lay coughing and choking dolefully beside her. To any one accustomed to his species, it was perfectly evident that he was suf-



fering from an accumulation of hair-balls, due to an unreasonable attention to his toilet, but the teaspoonful of butter recommended by Susy,

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

who had extended first aid to the injured for many years to just such a cat in her sister's house, was received with such scorn that the visitors fled hastily to the veranda, where wicker furniture, light grass-rugs and cool awnings strove to mitigate the interior decorations now known as "poor Brundage's horrors." Now that they were thus classified, strangely enough, they ceased to annoy the Carmichaels, who, released from any responsibility in connection with them, began to find them more amusing than otherwise, and pointed them out, with a variety of interested comment, to their guests.

Mr. Carmichael was engaged, though not, as Tom remarked, to the point of nervous prostration by any means, in the fire-insurance business. It was evidently not an exigent occupation, for it left him free to spend most of his time in scouring the country in quest of old furniture, for which he had the scent of a bloodhound, unearthing choice bits from the most unlikely places, and restoring them, in a completely equipped carpenter's shop which he had established in the barn, with the skill of a cabinet-maker. He was extremely fond of children, and took a great fancy to Martin, whom he carried about with him on his trips, took to every country circus within a radius of twenty miles (little Ursula walking or driving



HE TOOK MARTIN TO EVERY CIRCUS

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

gravely between them, with a hand given to each) and instructed in the mysteries of fishing, egg collecting, and camping, till the boy became his devoted admirer and slave, quoting him at every turn, and falling so completely under his influence that Susy must inevitably have grown jealous had she not been so wrapped up in her new farming interests, and become accustomed, moreover, to Martin's absence from the family circle of late, through his new school-life and his growing independence. Thomas, always less difficult to manage and more openly affectionate, was rapidly taking his older brother's place, and it was he who followed her about now from stable to garden, from garden to cellar, while Martin boiled the gypsy kettle and hunted summer apples with the roving Carmichaels along every lane in the country, and Mrs. Carmichael plunged into village politics and lobbied tirelessly in the interests of rural free-delivery, district nursing, road repairs, and school-boards.

It was a great disappointment to poor Susy that none of these new neighbors had turned out in the least as she had planned. From one of the earliest land-owners in that part of the country she had expected unlimited assistance, advice, and co-operation in the details of what Tom called her "return to the soil"; and lo! the people most

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

fitted to guide her deliberately evaded their opportunities, and presented the spectacle of such complete detachment from their surroundings as to amaze even the least enthusiastic suburbanite.

When Susy drove over to ask advice as to a milk-room from the daughter-in-law of the owner of the famous Carmichael Jerseys, whose exhibitions in butter, milk, and cheese had stripped county fairs of all their blue ribbons, she found her telephoning to one of the large New York dairy companies for extra cream, and all her guest's horrified expostulations and reminiscences of the neat, whitewashed cellar-compartment under their feet brought forth only a tolerant smile from the bright, wren-like eyes.

"My dear girl," she replied good-naturedly, hanging up the receiver and beginning a postal card to her poultry-man in Washington Market, "I've been all through this, you know. There's no harm in it, if you can afford it, but we're saving for Ursula's college education, you see, and ever since I gave up farming my hair has kept brown—there, over my ear, it grew white, when I took an interest in the milk."

"Now you're silly, Edith."

"Silly, my dear? That shows how little you know. I'm quite in earnest. Shall I ever forget those awful pails and pails and pails of milk when

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

nobody wanted any, and then how we had to beg a pint from these horrid country milkmen when poor baby was literally starving? And when one saw their barnyards—ugh! All the cows dry at once, or else all too young to milk, and not a servant who'd take care of it—or knew how, anyway—”

“But you must have had the old mother cows,” Susy argued.

“Yes, indeed, we had them,” Mrs. Carmichael agreed promptly, “but what good was that? Every heifer we had married above her station, as you may say—quite advantageously, you know—and so her babies were high-grade stock, and *she* had to be sold and *we* had the babies to raise. What did that mean? Calf-meal and hominy and skim-milk, my dear. And every heifer more and more particular, till Matthew wouldn't *look* at anything less than a prize-winner to marry her to! And of course that was all right, from one point of view. But it took one man, for the cows alone. Father Carmichael sunk a small fortune in his dairy. Take my advice, my dear—if you go beyond one cow, you're lost.”

Susy sighed uneasily.

“It's perfectly true that we haven't had any cream this summer, it's been so dry,” she admitted.

“And won't have, till you order a pint a day

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

from the Highfield Dairy Farm," said Mrs. Carmichael cheerfully. "We have it a lot in summer; it costs less than feeding the cows through the winter— Oh, Mat, Mat! Stop the vegetable man, won't you? He's going out, and I didn't tell Hulda about the tomatoes!"

Mr. Carmichael, with Martin hanging by one hand, Ursula swinging on the other, and a beautiful little inlaid table strapped to his shoulders, sent a cheerful hail in the direction of the lanky figure in a soiled linen-duster, bowed over on the high seat in front of his baskets.

"Be aisy with 'em now, Eph, and if you can't be aisy, why be as aisy as you can," he admonished the peddler good-humoredly, as the man, with a sly glance at Susy, began to explain how little he made on such trifling sales as his, and how his business had barely paid him this year.

"It's too bad about you, Eph—it really is. I've felt so for years (you know this table's pure Sheraton, Deedy; I got it for a dollar and a quarter). The only thing I can't understand is why you've kept in the business so long. Just living for others, I suppose. They say there's a lot in it, once you get started, and by George, Eph, you make me believe it! I remember you telling my mother once why you couldn't sell currants any cheaper by the crate than the basket, the year

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

our bushes didn't bear. The good woman died convinced that she'd sent you to the poorhouse!"

Eph grinned consciously.

"I was awful fond o' your mother, Mr. Carmichael, an' that's a sure thing," he said, piling peaches busily from one basket into another. "Sorry, Mis' Carmichael, but peaches is riz since last week. Up-state crop all gone, y' know. Six cents a basket is every bit I get—there ain't nothing into it, really, f'r me."

Mr. Carmichael sighed sympathetically.

"There it is again!" he said. "You ought to have a monument put up for you, Eph, you certainly ought. And the same with all you people around here. You're too generous—too forgetful of your own interests! If I didn't know about your daughter at the Normal School, and your son's motor-cycle, and that last mortgage you bought up, I'd feel you ought to get at least seven cents on *our* peaches!—Look out for the specked ones, Deedy!"

Eph chuckled admiringly.

"There ain't much gets by you, I bet, Mr. Carmichael," he said, cheerfully, "y' ain't back two months yet, and up with all the gossip. But that's yer mother, all over again. I'll never forget the good turn she done me, though, that year the crows ate my corn twice runnin'—d'you

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

'member that? Reg'lar pest of 'em, there was that year. If I got five bushel, I done well, an' two plantin's at that. The children was little then, an' couldn't be left, an' your mother she says t' m' wife: 'You send 'em right over to me, Alida, an' I'll look after 'em in the wash-house while I'm preservin', an' you c'n go help Eph scare

off those crows. You'll never get any corn any other way.'

"A sight of preservin' your mother did, Mr. Carmichael."

"I think she canned everything but grass," said Mrs. Carmichael with a sigh.

"I guess that's so," the vegetable man assented. "'Member that year the moles got under your melon hills, Mr. Carmichael, and et ev'ry last one? Poor ol' Mis' Carmichael—I c'n see her now, leanin' over her porch railin' an' tellin' me about it.

"I feel to give up ground fruit altogether, Eph,'



THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

she says t' me, 'it's terribly discouragin'! Over an' above the fondness of Mr. Carmichael for melons, I had so counted on the rinds for preserves!' But moles was something fierce that year, an' that's a fact."

Susy frowned uneasily.

"There seem to have been a great many bad years for different things in this part of the country," she observed, with a questioning glance at the vegetable man.

He smiled amusedly at the others.

"Why, bless your heart, ma'am," he returned tolerantly, "'tain't this part o' th' country, per-ticklerly. Crops is the dickens, anywhere. That's why I give 'em up and bought di-rect from Noo York—I'd a darn sight ruther depend on Fulton Market than Providence, as I tell my wife. It's more regular, 's you might say."

Mr. Carmichael chuckled appreciatively, and remarked tentatively, as Eph marked down his day's sales in a dingy blank-book and adjusted the old sail-cloth over his fruit:

"Mrs. Wilbour's thinking of going into farming a little, Eph—that's why she's interested."

"You don't say so!" said the vegetable man, heartily, "well, that's good, now. There's fine land about here, ma'am, and that piece you've bought, down by the post-road, old Deacon Car-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

michael prized very high, I c'n tell you. I only wish somebody 'd give me as many bar'ls o' potatoes as the old gentleman put bar'ls o' fertilizer onto that southwest field o' yours! Well, I must be gettin' on," and his old horse adjusted herself to her particular loping gait.

Susy scowled and stared coldly at the pure Sheraton table, dangled temptingly before her by its proud owner.

"I think people in the country are simply disgusting," she declared. "They're perfect hypocrites—that's all they are! First they tell you all the horrid things they can think of, and then in the next breath advise you to go ahead! Myron Plummer is just like that, exactly."

"Well, that *is* a fine piece of land Wilbour bought," Mr. Carmichael urged, "and as Eph says, grandfather did a lot for it. It's fine pasture."

"Yes, and why did you sell your share in it, then?" Susy demanded quickly. "You won't even keep one horse—and with all your land, too."

"Not while I can sell as well as I did that piece, and rent the rest," he returned comfortably, "not while the liveryman will keep a horse and buggy for me for twenty-five dollars a month, and send it up half a dozen times a day if I want

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

it. *I don't want to lie awake nights thinking up things to keep Myron Plummer busy—no, thanks.*"

"Susy wants chickens," Mrs. Carmichael observed, producing a pocket-camera and dexterously taking a snapshot of Martin and Ursula, who leaned effectively against the vine-covered stone posts of the entrance-gate.

Her husband turned a pitying glance on Susy.

"Does she, really?" he asked. "Well, well, well! I do beg and pray that you won't discuss it with her, Deedy. Chickens are like measles: they've got to be had, and you might as well get it over. What good did reasoning do you? What good did it do when I showed you mother's chicken-book and the amount she sunk in 'em? Father always said he could have bought the land the court-house stands on if it hadn't been for mother's chickens!"

"Oh yes," Susy burst out, "but your mother bought fancy stock and bred prize-winners—that's different. Now, if you take just two or three dozen ordinary fowls—"

"My poor child," said Mr. Carmichael kindly, "don't waste your breath—don't! You see, I've been all through this. If my mother hadn't made a success of two or three dozen ordinary fowls, you would have promptly replied that it was because she didn't go into it scientifically and im-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

prove the breed! Oh, I know you! There's only one way to get the chicken fever out of your system, and that's to have 'em. There's an incubator out in the old wash-house—I'll sell it to you cheap."

"I don't want it," she answered scornfully, "incubators are foolish. Wherever we visit that they have them it's all they talk about, and the waitress or the coachman or the poor host himself has to jump up and lower the heat or open some slide every other minute. No; two or three dozen ordinary—"

"That's all right," he interrupted firmly, "I know all about that. But I'll bet you here and now whatever you pay me for the incubator that you buy it, just the same."

"I heard her asking Myron Plummer about turkeys yesterday," pursued Mrs. Carmichael maliciously.

"Turkeys!"

Mr. Carmichael's eyes bulged in amazement.

"For the Lord's sake! Well, you are going it! Does Wilbour expect to get the Sugar Trust into his corporation work, may I ask? He'll need it."

"But nobody raises them now around here," poor Susy began defensively, "and they ought to pay, the *Suburban Home* says."

"Of course nobody raises 'em," he said, im-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

patiently, "and why not? Think a bit, Mrs. Wilbour. If it paid, wouldn't they? Do you know that, next to the horse and the cow and the hen and the pig, the turkey is the most skittish of God's creatures? Do you know that they hate you and despise you and get laryngitis purposely, and croup, and have to wear rubbers in the spring and mufflers in winter? Do you know that they can fly miles—and demonstrate their abilities early and often? Do you know—"

"Oh, well, I never meant to get them this year, anyhow," said Susy hurriedly. "And all those things aren't true of ducks, you can't say that! Anybody can keep ducks, Myron says."

Mr. Carmichael shook his head hopelessly.

"Oh, all right, all right!" he cried despairingly, "go on your own way! Just ask Myron, from me, whose ducks he means, that's all! Of course, *somebody* must keep all the ducks that run away, so perhaps Myron means that he has his eye on some special brood! I never could keep them, but that's because they always liked somebody else's pond better. Around here they don't say 'keep' ducks—they say 'raise' ducks, you'll notice. That means they raise the price for neighbors' boys to hunt them up."

"Nonsense!" Susy declared bravely, "they're cheap."

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"Of course they're cheap," he returned derisively. "They're cheap in the first place, because, if you have any sense, you don't buy them—you wait till somebody else's come on your property. They're cheap after that, because they're not there. Those are the only cheap ducks, Mrs. Wilbour—somebody else's!"

Susy put out her lower lip.

"Come, Martin, we must go," she said decidedly. "Say good-bye to Ursula and come directly. I sha'n't believe in anything if I stay here any longer."

"Oh yes, you will," the cynic shot at her as she left the gate, "yes, you will, dear lady—you'll believe in the Adams' Express Company: it's the best thing about the country!"





VIII

WHICH DEALS WITH A LITTLE SCIENCE AND A GREAT DEAL OF HEALTH

“**T**HEN you’re not going, Tom?”
Susy looked doubtfully at her husband.

“Not going? I tell you, I can’t go, Susy. It’s not that I’m not perfectly willing to, but I must be in court at eleven. So how can I?”

“Well, but, Tom, the funeral isn’t till half-past two, and you said yourself you expected to be through at one.”

Mr. Wilbour shouldered into his rubber coat discontentedly.

“It’s pouring,” he said shortly.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"I know. But just think, dear; suppose he *should* have left something to Martin—Aunt Emma insists that he has—just think how it will look!"

"But *I'm* not named after him," Tom argued sulkily.

"Oh, Tom, you're as bad as Martin, every bit! You talk just like him, sometimes."

"My dear girl, if you knew how I hated funerals! And Aunt Em is perfectly morbid about it—she'll insist on going to the grave if she goes in a canoe!"

"Well, what if she does? It's not as if you went to one every week—I must say, Tom, I think you're awfully childish about it. And Martin named after him—"

"It wasn't particularly after him, Susy. I've told you before. It's an old family name, and there were too many Thomases, and I've always been rather proud of that first old boy—Martin the first. Uncle Mart just happened to be the one in that generation. I didn't like to see it die out, that's all. I never saw Uncle Mart half a dozen times in my life. And a rain like this—"

"Oh, the rain!"

"That's all very well, Susan Wilbour"—Tom struck an attitude and brandished an umbrella

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

menacingly—"but you listen to me and mark my words: I—am—not—going to carry a frock-coat in and change in the office, you know. Neither will I put on that idiotic black tie somebody left out on my chiffonnier. If I do go, I'll go as I am. And there's only one possible train to Englewood I can get. And as far as going to the grave goes, I can tell you here and now that while I am willing to risk anything up to and including bronchitis for the heathen rites known as a family funeral, I draw the line at double—or single—pneumonia. Do I make myself clear?"

"Oh yes, you make yourself clear enough. He's not my uncle, anyway. It's no affair of mine. But, as I say, if he *should* have remembered Martin—"

"If I'm named after him, why can't I go to the funeral?"

A third voice entered the conversation, for whose somewhat strained tone the sleety October rain must be regarded as largely responsible, and the eldest of the Wilbour children sauntered into the hall.

"Nonsense!" said Tom shortly. "Why aren't you at school? Or are you waiting to drive in with me? You'd better stir a little lively, my lad—I've lost one train already."

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"Oh, *I'm* not going to school," said Martin placidly. "I'm talking about the funeral. Can't I go, mother? Where is he going to leave me—Uncle Mart, I mean. Bell said he'd leave me somewhere, she thought."

"Now you see, Susy, the result of this indiscriminate chatter about a thing that's in bad taste enough, anyhow," Tom began majestically. "I don't approve of this sort of thing at all. No one is going to leave you anywhere, Binks, unless I leave you behind this minute. Get your books and hurry."

"But I'm not going to school, father. There isn't any school."

Tom stopped in the middle of turning up his trousers, but Susy anticipated his remarks.

"As a matter of fact, Tom, there isn't," she interposed hastily. "There were eight cases of mumps yesterday morning, and I've heard of two more since. They've closed—it was the only sensible thing to do. I'll explain it later. Do hurry, or you'll miss this one!"

Tom kissed her hastily, and dived through the chilly sleet to the shelter of Myron Plummer's covered station wagon, where all previous arguments melted into the brief he devoured all the way to his office.

His case was successful, and the rain had sub-

"I'M NOT GOING TO SCHOOL."



THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

sided before he met Myron again, but even these ameliorations were not quite sufficient to account for the quiet satisfaction of his manner at dinner, where, relieved of his damp clothes, comforted with roast chicken, his favorite salad, and a fluffy apple-dumpling, and insensibly soothed and surrounded by the sweetness of Susy's demeanor (she had assumed a new tea-gown, and felt that she had been unreasonably insistent in a matter which really concerned her husband and his sense of duty far more than herself) he settled himself to his black coffee and a twisted light-brown cigar from a very special box, and leaned back, smiling at his wife.

"Well, Tootsie, what do you think has happened, after all?" he asked.

"Why, I don't know, dear—what do you mean? (I think I'll do the next dozen plain, with just one big initial in the centre, wouldn't you?) Are you going to get that railroad case?"

"Possibly—there's a chance. But that's not it. Aunt Em was right about the old gentleman, Toots."

"The old gentleman?" Susy had completely forgotten the morning's conversation by now, and held her embroidery at arm's-length to catch the effect, serene in the knowledge that the window-screens were at last down, dusted, and put away,

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

the wood-cellar neatly filled, the driveways trimmed and raked, and the place generally in order for the winter.

"Yes, Uncle Mart. He left Binks quite a little sum."

"Oh, Tom! How good—how much?"

"What do you think?"

"Why, dearest, how can I tell? As much as a—a thousand? Not that he needed to, of course, but Aunt Em says he could well afford it."

"Oh, dear me, yes, he could afford a lot if he'd wanted—he cut up very well. But he split it up among a lot of fool missionary societies and a college in India."

"Then it wasn't a thousand?"

"No—o—it was more."

"Oh, Tom!"

"It was quite a lot more."

"Tom!"

"It was ten."

"Ten thousand? Tommy, really? Oh, dearest, what a pity you didn't go, after all! Though of course you couldn't have possibly known—I don't mean that . . ."

Tom gazed at her with the never-failing amusement that ten years' contemplation of her mental processes still afforded him. He shook his head silently for a few seconds, then spoke.



TOM KISSED HER HASTILY AND DIVED THROUGH THE SLEET

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"But I did go," he remarked easily. "How did you think I knew all about it? I did go."

"Oh, did you? How good of you—Tom, I *am* pleased! It didn't really matter about the grave, of course—"

"But I went there, too."

She patted his knee enthusiastically.

"And I was so cross!" she murmured contritely. "I do hope you haven't caught cold! And as busy as you are, they couldn't have expected you to dress—"

"But I did," he assured her patiently. "I did dress. Aunt Em came to the office to go with me, and I was explaining that I hadn't any place to change, and that new clerk we've got—he's just about my size and awfully anxious to make good with the firm—said he could fit me out in a minute, he had the frock he'd worn to a wedding in a suit-case, and I changed in his room, and he went out and got me a tie and gloves. Aunt Em was pleased, and my silk hat was there, anyway."

"Tommy Wilbour, how lovely!" Susy sat upon his knee and kissed him warmly, while he stared at the ridiculous color in her cheeks.

"Well, what do you think of that?" he begged, finally, addressing the fire, apparently, and endeavoring to take her ruffling of his side hair in

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

the spirit in which it was meant. "What *do* you think of that? I believe, Susan Wilbour, you are more pleased that I packed myself into Hill's vest than that Binks has ten thousand of his own! It must be darn queer to be a woman!"

"Not at all, Tom—you don't understand. I'm delighted about the money, of course. Think of it—ten thousand! How pleased Aunt Emma must be! But it would have been so unfeeling if, after all, that—"

"I had worn a dark-green tie? I suppose so. The other legatees would have broken the will by now, undoubtedly. But it was decent of the old gentleman, wasn't it, now? He said he appreciated the way we'd felt about the name, and, from all he'd heard, Binks was safe to be a chip of the old block. Aunt Em wrote him all about that turning-the-other-cheek business, it seems, and he wrote back to her that it did all three of us credit—you and me and Binks, he meant—and that he'd had a good laugh over it."

"What shall we do with it, Tom? Put it in the bank or invest—"

"My bank is busted," a quiet voice interpolated, "and, anyway, I'd rather buy a ranch in Australia. I know of a good one. Did you bring the money home? Shall I be called Uncle Mart now?"



" AUNT EM WAS PLEASED "

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

They started nervously, for they had supposed themselves alone in the room; and yet it would have been manifestly unfair to accuse a person of sly eavesdropping who lay placidly at full length on a rug not two feet away from them, his head supported by his elbows, a large book under his nose.

"The way you keep quiet lately, Martin, is simply nerve-racking!" his mother exclaimed uneasily. "You just *appear* in places, like Indians and ghosts and burglars! I can't see why it is that boys either walk like a—an avalanche, or else glide about the way you do nowadays!"

Martin looked gratified.

"If I was an Indian, you'd be dead before you knew it, wouldn't you?" he asked cheerfully. "I practise it nights, barefooted. I think I ought to have gone to that funeral, though. Bell said a black tie wouldn't have been much of an expense, and 'twould have shown respect."

Tom stiffened angrily in his chair.

"Really, Susy," he began, "I must say that Bell occasionally forgets—"

"But, Tom, dear, just think how long she's been here! She feels like one of the family, you know. And she'll be so glad about Martin's money."

Tom sighed resignedly.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"Then I know what she'll do," he declared: "she'll burst into tears and say she had him from the bottle!"

"She does that every once in a while now," Martin added thoughtfully. "Bell acts awful funny nowadays. But I think I might have gone to that funeral."

"There, there, Binks, don't talk any more about it."

Tom's tone was good-natured but decided, and Martin returned contentedly enough to his book; the incident was apparently closed.

But the mischievous little imp that haunts the mother of small children (his name is "Why-let-well-enough-alone?") prompted Susy to her undoing, and with the kindest intention in the world she leaned over and patted her son's shoulder.

"Little boys don't go to funerals, dear," she said. "They're not very pleasant. Father had to go, but he didn't really want to—he didn't enjoy it."

"Father don't like chocolate-cake," Binks returned, a slight shade of resentment in his tone; "but I do, as it happens."

Now such an apparently irrelevant remark from Thomas would have produced no result, conversationally; his communications were oftener than



"SHE'LL SAY SHE HAD HIM FROM THE BOTTLE"

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

not of this slightly jerky character, and only the funniest of them provoked discussion in a family circle sated with his peculiar form of repartee. But Martin was, if anything, painfully adult of late in his grasp of social situations, and such an inconsecutive answer had all the effect, from him, that it would have had from any one two feet taller.

"Chocolate-cake!" Susy echoed vaguely.

"And the phonograph, too," Martin went on, a distinct grievance now audible in his voice. "I know he don't like that, either, but I do—I love 'em; and that's why I think I might have gone and him stayed home. Marches especially. You hear the drum and everything."

Tom scowled with pardonable confusion.

"What's the matter with you, Binks, anyway?" he demanded. "You're talking nonsense. Nobody said anything about chocolate-cakes or phonographs, though it's quite true I detest them both. But they have nothing to do with funerals."

Martin cocked his head knowingly. "Oh, haven't they?" he said with a sly satisfaction, adding impudently, "but they have, as it happens."

"I must say, Susy, that of all the things that boy has picked up lately, 'as it happens' is the

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

most tiresome," Tom complained irritably. "It seems to me he says nothing else.—You don't know what you're talking about, Martin—you've got funerals mixed up with some other form of social dissipation, I assure you. It's quite true that odd things are seen there, occasionally, but the two you mention are among the last I should look for.—I think I'll put the money in Hartwell's Trust Company, dear. The old fellow will be pleased as Punch to begin with, you know, and then, it wouldn't be a bad thing, anyhow."

"The funeral I went to there was chocolate-cake and the biggest horn - thing I ever saw on a phonograph—how do they get that talk into the phonograph, father?"

"Why, Martin, you never went to a funeral. You mustn't be so obstinate, dear, it annoys father. You mean the strawberry festival—festival, not funeral," Susy admonished.

Martin closed his book definitely and sat up cross-legged on the rug, his jaw set firmly, the light of battle in his eye.

"If you say that again, you'll be contradicting," he began forcefully. "When I say funeral, I mean funeral. A strawberry festival is ten cents a plate for children and only one piece of cake. A funeral, you get all you want. At the festival you had to pay five cents, and the phonograph

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

was all talking—a darkey and an Irishman and a dog having a fight. At the funeral, it was just music. And a woman that sang, too.”

“Whose funeral was it, Binks?” Tom asked quietly.

“Whose? Whose?” Martin repeated in a puzzled tone. “What do you mean? Who owned it? God, I suppose. You can’t own a funeral, can you?”

“Father means, who had died?” Susy explained tremulously, but he still looked puzzled.

“I didn’t see any one dying,” he said thoughtfully, “everybody was alive that was in the library—and the dining-room, too. There were some stuffed birds on the top shelf, though.”

“There, you see,” Susy burst out in relieved tones, “it’s all a mistake—you went to some party or reception, dear. Funerals always have—there has to be—oh, dear, Tom, how horrid! But I suppose he’ll have to see a coffin some day.”

“Oh, I know all about coffins,” Martin assured her tolerantly, “there was one came next door to the school last week, when the cook died, and the man let me bury one of the boys in it. He buried me, next. It was in that wagon with little doors in the back. The cook was so fat they couldn’t carry her down the back stairs. It was at recess-time they came, and all of us ran ’round

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

to the back porch window—you could see beautifully!”

“Oh, Tom!” his mother gasped.

“But this was a funeral—it was different,” he pursued instructively. “They had tea at one end of the dining-room table and chocolate at the other. With whipped cream. Ursula and I had two cups each. Don’t you remember, I brought you some flowers that day? They were from there. They had lots and lots of flowers.”

“I believe he’s been to one of Edith’s Christian Science funerals, Tom!” Susy exclaimed suddenly. “You know they don’t have any—any—”

“Any corpse?” Tom suggested ironically, to be quite honestly overwhelmed by her simple affirmative.

When she added, deprecatingly, “And really, in a great many ways, dear, it must be much pleasanter—for everybody . . .” he burst into unrestrained mirth.

“Especially for the one that didn’t die—I believe you!” he assured her. “I’d a lot rather not be dead at *my* funeral, if you ask me. I’d prefer even chocolate-cake and a phonograph. But do you think, seriously, Toots, that this sort of thing is good for Binks?”

“We—ell”—Susy poked her contemplative dimple with its customary finger—“I don’t just know

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

what to do, dear. He's over there all the time—he's perfectly devoted to Ursula, you know—and I can't quite tell him to believe almost everything he hears there, but not that sort of thing, can I? You see, Mr. Carmichael doesn't have anything to do with it—it's only Edith and Ursula. And they are certainly very well—they're hardly ever sick, you must admit."

"But so is Carmichael, isn't he?"

"Well, yes, I suppose so."

"Then why must I admit anything?"

Susy removed the customary finger and assumed the expression of one about to clear her mind.

"Yes, I know," she said thoughtfully, "and I must say that when it's a case of contagious disease it's pretty hard on the rest of us. It was Ursula's mumps, you know, that closed Martin's school."

"No!"

"Yes. Didn't I tell you about it? Martin, kiss father good-night now, and start up-stairs."

"I know more about Science than father does, if you're going to talk about that," grumbled Martin, "and I don't see why I can't sit up till after nine o'clock when I'm more than nine years old! Ursula eats her whole dinner with the family—not just vegetables, and if the pudding

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

is plain. Her mother says you waste a lot of time worrying about mine and Thomas's stummicks: if you'd just declare the truth and have a little trust, the Divine Love would take care of our stummicks all right!"

Susy gasped.

"Don't say stummicks, Martin—stomachs," she began uncertainly.

"Perhaps that's part of the system," Tom suggested coldly. "I notice the Divine Love, by-the-way, didn't do much for Carmichael's stomach that night the fish was off color—he was far the worst of any of us."

"Father Carmichael just spreads error all the time—you can't do anything with him!" Martin explained eagerly. "He promised Ursula she could treat him from four to five for that fish, and he'd just be quiet, and then at five o'clock he was all well and went out for a walk, and Mother Carmichael was so glad, and all the while the upstairs clock had stopped, and it was from five to six they were really treating him. So Mother Carmichael was cross, and Ursula's about given him up, she says."

Tom chuckled.

"Good-night, Binks," he said abruptly, and Martin, with many backward and appealing glances, dragged himself reluctantly from the room.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"The maddening part of it was," Susy resumed easily, "that Ursula really had the lightest case of mumps I ever heard of. She gave them to lots of children in the school, and so they really had to close. They had them hard, too. But she was really hardly uncomfortable. I thought Edith was quite unreasonable about it, for she knew all the while she had them when she sent her."

"Knew?" Tom queried reprovingly. "I thought there was no such thing in that lingo—no mumps, nor anything else."

"Oh, well, there's not, in one way," Susy answered vaguely, "but whatever she may believe as a Christian Scientist, of course as a—a person, you know . . . I mean, everybody knows what mumps are."

"That seems to be the difficulty," Tom said dryly. "It might have been very unpleasant if it had been scarlet fever, for instance. They ought to live in a town together, then nobody 'd care a—a hurrah what they 'declared' or 'spread' or 'claimed.' But it's harder on the benighted unbeliever, as a matter of fact, than anything since the Inquisition."

"You do put things so strongly, Tom!"

"That's all right; but I never happened to have had the mumps, Susan Wilbour, and I can tell you here and now that I'm not anxious to begin.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

And it's simply ridiculous to hear Binks pattering off all that nonsense. I want it stopped."

"That's all very well, Tom, but what are we going to do? You talk as if he was a baby—or Thomas. When he was little I always knew where he was and what he was doing, but it's different now. He's at school all day, and off with Mr. Carmichael and Ursula Saturdays, and often Sundays, for that matter; and that's certainly better than being with those rough boys that play ball up the road. Of course, I don't approve of all of Edith's ideas, but the trouble is, he isn't old enough to explain all that to; don't you see? Why, Tom, I don't know what Martin is thinking any more! He's so quiet, and he just closes his lips and walks off; but he doesn't even trouble to argue, sometimes. It's just like anybody else . . ."

"I see." Tom looked thoughtfully at his wife. "You mean he's an individual."

"Yes, that's what I mean," she said, relieved. "He's a—a regular person, now. And he likes different people. I don't care for Ursula much, myself—of course, I don't pretend to know anything about girls—but she seems so self-conscious and managing to me. But Martin adores her: everything she does is right. I should think she'd be very hard to live with."

Tom chuckled.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY



"You talk like a prospective mother-in-law," he warned her. "Look out! You may be living with her yet."

"Never!" Susy cried with spirit. "Please don't talk so, Tom! It's—it's awful!"

"Oh, she's a good enough little thing! You exaggerate her bad points. Carmichael will knock all that nonsense out of her." And Mar-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

tin's financial windfall renewed their happy plans.

But the next Sunday, when they lunched with the Carmichaels, he sympathized more fully with Susy than he had expected to. On entering the hall, which to Susy's never-ending discomfort still presented *Niagara by Moonlight* and the offensive bamboo easel to astonished guests, they had encountered Ursula weeping silently by the big yellow cat, who lay, extended limply on a hideous Brussels rug, in a doubtful state of recovery from what had evidently proved a more than unusually serious indisposition.

"I suppose you're 'declaring the truth'?" Susy began disgustedly.

The child nodded mutely and stared fixedly at her pet, whose tawny sides heaved distressfully.

"Now, Ursula, I tell you plainly and for the last time," Susy went on firmly, kneeling by the exhausted animal and lifting its eyelid with a practised hand, "unless Cæsar gets something done for him, he's going to die, and you won't have any cat any more. You're old enough to understand that perfectly, and I made up my mind the last time that never again would I work over him with butter and brandy and warm blankets, only to have you say, when I brought him 'round, that he had begun to be better just

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

as I came, and that you had demonstrated on him—it's too ridiculous! I felt so sorry for the poor animal that I didn't care how sneaky you were about it, but I'm not going to play that game any more. If you want Cæsar cured this time, you've got to ask me to do it, and admit afterward that I did do it, and promise you'll try to feed him properly after this and remember his olive-oil every week. Now, will you?"

Ursula looked stubborn.

"God made Cæsar," she said.

"Very well," Susy returned impatiently, "and God made you, too, I suppose; but if your stomach was all full of little balls of hair, the way I told you Cæsar's was, you'd find that nothing but castor-oil would get them out."

The cat stretched feebly and turned a glazed eye upon his little mistress. Ursula snatched him to her little breast.

"Oh, Cæsar, Cæsar, why can't you believe?" she moaned. "Love is all around you, Cæsar; why can't you trust it?"

Tom snorted violently and Cæsar choked; Martin, who had stolen silently into the group from some mysterious hiding-place, looked sympathetically at his friend, and, squatting beside her, fixed Cæsar with the eye of the Ancient Mariner. He appeared to be muttering spells, and Tom

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

scowled deeply upon his first-born. The group was altogether tragic and formidable.

"I'm not at all sure that I can cure him this time," Susy remarked imperturbably, "he seems very low. You'll have to make up your mind, Ursula. And your father's right there in the doorway, so you can't deny that all this happened, as you usually do, you know. Anybody can see that Cæsar is a very sick cat. Shall I get some brandy?"

"Come, come, Ursula," Tom added, "don't be a little donkey. When Cæsar's well, love is all that's needed, I've no doubt; but now he's really sick, and you'd better have a doctor, hadn't you?"

Ursula looked wildly at Martin, bitterly at Susy, and shamefacedly at her father. Then, as Cæsar began to pant alarmingly, she staggered to her feet and thrust him into Susy's arms.

"Take him!" she gasped. "He hasn't had anybody but God for seven years—but take him!"

And the solemn procession moved out to the laundry, where frenzied chokings and splutterings, followed by a few feeble wails and then a great calm, informed the unbeliever that a brutal empiricism had triumphed again over all the subtleties of the spirit.

Unfortunately the actual success of the operation was not quite sufficient to lift the cloud of

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

discomfiture produced by the inadmissible methods employed, and Binks and Ursula devoured their chocolate ice-cream in reproachful gloom. It may be a little unreasonable in four adults to allow the mental depression of two children to affect them, but any one who has sat through a similar banquet knows that this state of things is quite possible, and when the ruffled though superior mind of Mrs. Carmichael lost itself in polemic and explanatory musings, it was felt that the luncheon was not wholly a social success, and guests and hosts alike had become a little embarrassed.

This was not helped by Tom's third refusal of sponge-cake, a delicacy pressed upon him with cheerful persistence by the waitress.

"I never eat it, Katy," he explained at length, "it doesn't agree with me—never did."

"It's a very reliable recipe," the hostess urged, descending suddenly from the clouds of transcendental thought which were popularly supposed to be indicated by her present fixed expression. "It's been three generations in my family, and we've always given it to the children."

"I don't doubt it," Tom assured her gallantly, "and it looks delicious, but really, I might just as well eat a bath-sponge, Mrs. Carmichael. I've never been able to manage it, somehow."

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

Ursula looked up with her peculiar, oblique glance.

"Never mind, Mr. Wilbour," she said gently, and the amazed Tom felt somehow that she was distinctly forgiving him for some unremembered sin, "never mind. Go right ahead, and I'll take care of it!"

"Take care of it," Tom repeated wonderingly, "You don't understand me, kiddy. I mean that this particular kind of cake seems to—if you'll excuse the frankness of the remark—seems to swell up like a dry sponge in what the poet so felicitously calls my 'inside workin's' and makes me very uncomfy. And not having your—er—powers of hypnotic suggestion, I just have to grin and bear it."

"Yes, I know," Ursula replied mildly, while a curious expression grew upon her father's face—"I know; but you go ahead and eat it, just the same; I'll take care of it for you."

Martin regarded the intrepid child with deep admiration.

"That's how I eat peanut-brittle, father," he added encouragingly, "it used to make me feel awful queer most gen'rally, but sometimes I eat a box at a time now."

Tom's color grew slowly deeper—probably from the unconscious holding of his deep breaths.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"Do I understand you to mean that you are prepared to assume the responsibility for my digestion of this sponge-cake?" he demanded formally.

Mr. Carmichael looked conservatively at his plate; his wife appeared to resume her presence at the table, and regarded her daughter with impersonal approval. Susy stared in utter amazement.

"Yes," Ursula repeated gently, "I'll attend to it, Mr. Wilbour. You go right along."

Tom gripped his napkin firmly and eyed the child with cold decision.

"My dear young lady," he began, and at his tone even Miss Carmichael jumped slightly, "for forty-two years, now, I have attended to my own digestive processes, and I think, if it's all the same to you, that I'll just worry along in my old feeble-minded way. Probably it leaves a great deal to be desired from a professional point of view like yours, but it's the best I can do, and I'm afraid you'll have to let it go at that."

After this episode no one suggested the Wilbour's departure, but, on the other hand, no one deprecated it, and as Tom freely admitted that he had no appetite for his usual cigar, the trio left very soon after Katy, somewhat depressed herself by now, had served them with finger-bowls. Martin had intended to remain and join Ursula

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

and her father on their accustomed Sunday afternoon stroll, but this was vetoed by Tom, and at his short,

"Come, Binks, hop up, now—no arguing!" the young gentleman climbed resentfully into the small front seat, absurdly outgrown by now, his features set in a decided pout.

"I cannot understand what Edith is thinking of!" Susy announced finally, when the short drive had been accomplished in almost utter silence and they were alone in the library again, Martin having established himself with a book in the drawing-room. "This is really too much!"

"I'm glad you look at it that way," her husband answered briefly, "because as far as I'm concerned, Toots, nothing Binks is going to learn from your famous rough boys by the pond is going to handicap him for life like this particular brand of tommy-rot. I'd far rather lead him by the hand to the pond to-morrow."

"Oh, dear, Tom, you don't know how rough they are!"

"No—I've never sported with them, myself, if that's what you mean; but if it's the ice-man's boy, and that odd-job man's and the teamster's youngsters, I can judge pretty well; and, honestly, dear, I doubt if they'll contaminate him so terribly, anyhow."

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"But, Tom, they do use such language!"

"What do they say?"

"Gracious, *I* don't know! But Bell heard them once, and she—"

"My dear girl, my respect for Bell is great, but you know she's only a children's nurse, when all's said and done. She can't possibly judge about how much a ten-year-old can stand. And you know, Susy, there are lots of things the boy has got to hear that you and Bell won't like. You've got to make up your mind to it sooner or later. A decent boy works 'em out of his system one way or another, but unless you shut him into a barrel and feed him through the bung-hole, as somebody said, you can't prevent his knowing 'em."

"Do you *want* him to know them, Tom?"

"No, I can't say I do, exactly," Mr. Wilbour answered honestly, "but I've got nothing to do with it, you see, dear. It's one of those things that you simply can't regulate. If you think that the 'language' that frightened Bell is a monopoly of those rough boys by the pond, you're very much mistaken. It's not an exclusive product of ponds, I assure you, dear. We get over it, though. And I must say that it's going to be a lot healthier for Binks to absorb a little of that sort of grimy vocabulary while he's playing ball

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

and exercising generally, than it's likely to be if he hangs around that morbid little idiot while she's digesting other people's sponge-cake for 'em!"

"So you see what I mean, now!" Susy's apparent irrelevance expressed a certain relief, and her husband understood her readily enough.

"Oh yes, of course, if she does that sort of thing often," he agreed disgustedly. "'I'll take care of it,' indeed—heavens above!"

"Yes, yes," Susy said hastily, anxious to avert the impending tirade, "but about Martin, dear. Bell's going to feel awfully about those boys—the ice-man's son really swears, she says. I don't know what she will say when I tell her you want him to play with them."

Tom shifted uneasily in his chair. "Don't misunderstand me, Toots," he began. "I don't say I'd pick those boys out as my one best bet, as it were—far from it. As a matter of fact, you can't pick boys out, ever. Certainly not in this country, anyhow. I shouldn't like to think he'd never have any other companions. But he will: he's sure to. And how do you know how much swearing he's heard, anyway? Do you think he'd come home and confide it to you and Bell as soon as he'd acquired it? I can tell you I didn't hasten to impart every addition to my vocabulary to

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

Aunt Em! Not much. And I don't think I'm particularly profane."

"Why, Tom, of course not!"

"Very well. Don't you suppose I heard all the words you and Bell are worrying about? But I can usually struggle through an ordinary conversation without them, you know."

"Oh, dear me, Tom," she sighed, "what a responsibility boys are, aren't they? I see what people mean when they're afraid of having them."

"Well, I don't know."

Tom looked thoughtful.

"I'd rather have Binks on my mind than Ursula—I tell you that, Tootie!"

"Yes, in some ways, I suppose so," she admitted.

"You see, it's not what the boy *hears* but what he *does* that counts, dear. It's that young lady's actions that get on my nerves. Now if Binks says, as I hope he can (by and large, and more or less, you know) that he hasn't done anything he'd be ashamed to have you know, I'd trust him. But if he ever says that he hasn't heard anything he'd be ashamed to have you hear, he's a little liar—you can be sure of that!"

At this Susy only murmured inarticulately, and there was a short, troubled silence.

"Of course, I believe that you know about all

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

that, dear," she began at last, "and I think, myself, that he's been a little too much at the Carmichaels', though I'm very fond of Edith in a great many ways, and Mr. Carmichael has been very kind to Martin and taught him lots about trees and animals and all that sort of thing."

("Oh, Carmichael's all right!")

"But we mustn't forbid him to go there entirely, all at once. It will be a regular grievance with him, and he does take things so seriously, Tom."

"Certainly not—I shouldn't dream of it. And you'll find it will be all right—if you give him a little longer rope, Susy, and let him branch out for himself more, he'll drop all that nonsense of his own accord. A little of the girl business is good for 'em, anyway," Mr. Wilbour concluded magnanimously—"a mixed diet's always best."

But he had not reckoned sufficiently on his son's firmness of disposition (a firmness described by Susy as a combination of Brinkerhoff decision of character and Wilbour obstinacy) which was, moreover, pointed by a certain sulkiness not observed in either of these families. Moreover, Martin had always displayed a marked tendency toward the formation of habits which, once settled, were very difficult to break without some distinct crisis, and no one would have been safe

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

in fixing a date for his release from Ursula's proselytizing influence had it not been for the unexpected appearance on the scene of the never-to-be-forgotten Miss Carmer.

Miss Carmer was portly and pink and placid. She had pepper-and-salt hair of the dank, flat variety, which lay flat from a pink part that bisected her head. She had a double chin, and every intention, apparently, of acquiring a triple one at no distant date. She spoke seldom and gently—but not from any undue softness of disposition or flaccidity of mind, for she was a woman of very definite and determined convictions. Upon her convictions, in fact, and her determination depended her livelihood, for Miss Carmer was what used to be called a “healer,” though at the period of this narrative she preferred to be known as a “demonstrator.” Mrs. Carmichael had been much pleased with one of her lectures, and had hospitably invited her for a week's unprofessional visit before her autumn labors should begin. For Ursula's mother, though small and spare, was the fortunate possessor of a constitution of steel, and beyond the mysterious attack of something broadly described as nervous breakdown, on the occasion, eight years ago, of her third house-moving in one year, had never required the services of any of the high-priestesses of her then-acquired faith.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

It was during the course of this visit that Martin, lunching with his friends, had become deeply impressed with the big, silent woman, whose practical good sense and calm banality of disposition appeared in every one of her few words, and struck the cynical observer as singularly at variance with the mystical curiosities of her extraordinary convictions. For one so bitterly opposed to the usually conceded weight of the material functions of life she certainly absorbed an amazing quantity of nourishment, a state of affairs described less elegantly by Mr. Wilbour; but on the other hand, as Susy pointed out with some acumen, to manage such frequent and thorough refectations without any attendant symptoms of indigestion implied a justified reliance upon some superhuman power and abilities far beyond the normal.

Martin had passed his life among talkative people, and it was probably the sphinx-like placidity of Miss Carmer, coupled with Ursula's awed accounts of her marvellous powers, that so attracted him, for to do the lady justice, she never referred to her unusual endowments herself, and, indeed, confined her exertions to eating and ponderously rocking to and fro on the veranda, speaking, in the words of the juvenile classic, only when she was spoken to.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

During the luncheon in question Ursula had been voluble in the description of one of her schoolmates, who had fallen a victim to a misplaced confidence in the decorative qualities of poison-ivy, and paid for the vanity of appearing in a red wreath of it by a shocking condition of the usual puffy and painful countenance.

"I told her," observed the young disciple dogmatically, "that if she had told Miss Carmer about it, she needn't have had that nasty laudatum sopped on at all, but Miss Carmer could have demonstrated right from our piazza, and you could—couldn't you, Miss Carmer?"

"I could if I had been called upon," Miss Carmer replied briefly.

"Do you mean it wouldn't have itched?" Martin inquired abruptly.

"Certainly not," replied the demonstrator placidly.

"Wouldn't she scratch it once—not once?" he insisted.

"I do not think there would be any necessity," the reservoir of mental power responded.

Martin said no more, but appeared sunk in thought, and left the house alone, to Ursula's surprise.

A few hours later—to be precise, at the end of the time required for his arrival after the after-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

noon session of his school—he leaped up the veranda steps where the family were gathered to celebrate the somewhat formidable function of Miss Carmer's afternoon tea, and sank panting and cross-legged at her substantial, square-toed feet.

“Hurry up, Miss Carmer, hurry up!” he cried eagerly, “if you'll demonstrate right away father'll see you, driving by, and then he'll see you really can do it!”

“What do you mean? Demonstrate what?” Miss Carmer inquired with some distaste, withdrawing her neat skirts, and casting a displeased glance at her cooling and threatened tea-cup.

“Why, don't you know?” he demanded, surprised and disappointed. “Can't you tell? I thought you could. Ursula said you didn't care if the door was shut, or if it was even in a different house, and the graveyard isn't any farther away than anybody's house might be . . .”

“I haven't the least idea what you are talking about. Don't jog my plate, please,” said Miss Carmer coldly.

Martin drew a long breath. He felt distinctly less heroic and interesting, somehow, than before this disconcerting conversational shower-bath, and the expression of his hostess was no aid to his first enthusiasm.

“Why, it was the poison-ivy,” he explained,

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

less vivaciously but still trustful. "I poison awful easy, and I was quite hot when I rubbed it in; it grows on the 'Piscopal graveyard wall, you know, on the way home, and I rubbed it in well; I knew you wouldn't care about that. Then that girl's father and mother could see for themselves—and mine, too," he added, pushing out his lip in a characteristic manner all too familiar to one who knew him well. "Will you do it out here? You'd better begin now, though, for it's itching like the dickens, Miss Carmer!"

There was a deadly silence. Ursula's round eyes alone contributed to his self-respect, for the Carmichaels sat petrified with horror, and Miss Carmer, as she deposited her cup and plate heavily on the piazza rail and rose slowly to her feet, looked at him as though he were some noxious insect. A dark flush spread over her broad, calm face, and her voice broke from its usual practised placidity as she shook her finger at him quite in the manner of the unregenerate and faithless citizen.

"Do you mean, you bad little boy, that you have deliberately applied poison-ivy to your face as—as a test?" she cried, puffing out her cheeks portentously.

Martin nodded dumbly.

"Then I hope that you will be well punished for such shameful behavior!" she declared. "I

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

never heard of anything more disgraceful—I should certainly refuse to treat you!” And she swept majestically to her room.

“The kid’s game, anyway, Toots,” said Tom the next day, looking down thoughtfully at the bandaged, feverish little object writhing among its laudanum-soaked pillows, two dots of eyes like shoe-buttons just glimmering above the swollen cheeks. “As a matter of fact, he’s a what-do-you-call-it—a martyr to Science, if you want to look at it that way. And Lord knows he’s punished enough.”

Susy shook her head helplessly.

“I don’t know what to do with him,” she whispered sadly. “Did you ever know a child that took things so literally? He *is* so set, Tom! Ursula would never do a thing like that, you know. And she really believes it.”

“Pooh! she hasn’t got the nerve,” the martyr’s father returned with inexplicable pride. “The little devil certainly gave the woman her chance, you must admit.”

Susy sighed, and approached the sofa with a cooling draught.

“No, Martin, no pudding,” she said firmly; “the doctor says you must not overload your stomach, with your temperature, dear.”

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

From the puffed lips behind the soaked cotton came a distorted murmur.

"God made my stomach!" declared the victim obstinately.

Tom gulped wildly, a prey to conflicting emotions.

"That's all right, old man," he said at length, "so He did. But He made your brains, too, you know, and if you'll use 'em a little, He'll do as much for you in the end, you'll find."

And it seemed to him that Martin caught his meaning.





IX

WHICH DEALS WITH THE CHANCES AND CHANGES OF THIS MORTAL LIFE



It was a fresh April morning, clear and fine—a skyful of woolly white clouds above and the tender green grass of an early spring already firm under foot. To Mrs. Wilbour, neat and taut in a business-like, short tweed skirt, an unmitigated high, stiff collar, and competent gauntleted driving-gloves, the day would once have been a day for a lazy morning expedition with Fido, Martin, and Thomas tucked in beside her, Lappy and Drabble gambolling behind, perhaps even a picnic luncheon in a warm hollow some few miles off. It is certain that she would have hummed a little tune on her way to the

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

stable, and called the attention of its occupant to the gracious state of the weather and the generally amusing character of life in the mounting spring.

But those days were no more. Mrs. Wilbour's hasty glance at the firmament had produced no further emotional result than a conviction that the chickens had better be turned out directly, and thus allow the double advantage of healthy exercise after a long rainy period, and an opportunity for whitewashing the roosts, which conviction she promptly imparted to Harvey Roper, who shared with Myron Plummer the responsibilities of the now much-extended establishment. Nor was there to be observed upon Harvey's face a trace of the tolerant amusement that marked for so long Myron's relations with his mistress. On Susy's consulting the little watch in her leather wristlet and suggesting that she had expected to find the stable-work done by now, Harvey agreed humbly that there was some reason in her expectation, and that he guessed he *was* a little behindhand, maybe.

"And if there are more than three horses ahead of Fido at the blacksmith's, Harvey," she continued, "don't wait, but go for the ice directly. We can't spare all day for it. Take the old station-wagon with one seat, and bring back

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

Myron's phosphates and your own hominy. I'll go down for Mr. Wilbour myself with Princess and the phaeton. That man is coming at five to look over the heifer, and I didn't put any price on her—I'd like to see what he'll offer. If he wants to bring over those young peach-trees he spoke of, and *put them in himself*, we might consider that instead of cash. But he'll have to be responsible."

"Yes'm," said Harvey respectfully. "Do you want I sh'd catch Martin's guinea-hens again? They're off, and I can't promise when I'll be able to get 'em—they're awful cute about hidin' on me. He ain't fed the goat for two nights runnin', either, and his guinea-pigs is in a condition, I c'n tell you! O' course, I'm willin' to tend to 'em all, Mis' Wilbour; 'tain't that, but you told me to tell you, and so I do."

"Certainly, Harvey, that's quite right. And Saturday morning, too—it's disgraceful! Do you know where he is?"

Without waiting for an answer, Susy pulled a little silver whistle from her belt and blew a shrill blast. A moment later there came a patter of feet, and Thomas, trousered and shirted now, and astonishingly tall, his plump, baby lines all gone, trotted obediently through the barn-yard, where a wire enclosure restrained the ducks from any

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

farther excursions than their own generous tank afforded, stopped to pat the tiny new calf that nozzled for his little brown thumb, and sucked at it to his vociferous delight, and stood obediently before his mother.

"Have you done your work, dear? Is the veranda all clean? Are the puppy's pans empty?"

"Yes, mother," the youth responded virtuously, "I'm all done my works—all of them; but Martin, he won't do nothing at all—"

("Anything.")

"—anything at all, he won't do, and he's reading a magazine-book on the kitchen porch, and he's going to have a frosted cake just the same. Can't Thomas have a frosted cake just the same, too?"

"Certainly not," she answered, decidedly; "the cakes are for luncheon. If you are hungry at half-past ten, you may have bread-and-butter. Tell Martin to come directly to me in the hay-barn. Did he hear the whistle?"

"Yes, he did heard it, and he said he was too big to come like a puppy, he said, and he thought he might get a headache if he came in the sun—"

Harvey chuckled, and Susy left the stable with dignity.

"And don't ask me for a new carriage-sponge this month, Harvey, if they are to be used for the stable stairs," she said severely, "for they cost a

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

little too much. They tell me in the kitchen that the strainer of the milk-pail is broken again, and that they have to use two cheese-cloths—I should much prefer to know about these things when they happen. And the laundryman says that he cannot be responsible for Mr. Wilbour's shirts if they stick out of the end of the wagon in a rain-storm. That is certainly reasonable. Come, Thomas, mother will take you with her to see Mrs. Carmichael, after I've finished up here.— Is that the strap of the mail-bag, Harvey, on the harness-room floor?"

"Yes'm," said Harvey meekly, picking up the offending strap and glaring revengefully at the misused carriage-sponge, "I guess it is. Martin, he was asking if he could have it to put around an old dress-suit case he had out here for me to mend."

"For you to mend!" Susy paused in the door disgustedly. "How often have I asked you, Harvey, not to pay any attention to Martin when he takes up your time that way? It's one thing in the winter, when there's more time, but now it's ridiculous. What does he want of a suit-case, anyway?"

"I don't know, Miss Wilbour; he said something about needing one very bad, and I said there was that old one in the loft that Mr. Wil-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

bour spoiled, packin' it full o' wet bathin'-suits, so he swarmed up 'n' got it, and I was just givin' him a little help with it, that's all."

At this point Martin was observed on the driveway, lagging along with a twisty, awkward gait recently acquired by him, to his mother's intense annoyance. In one hand he held a tattered magazine; from the other depended the rapidly lengthening tail of a ball of heavy twine, which he dragged, somewhat ill-advisedly, by the end farthest from the ball. His expression was one of deep injury, not materially lightened by his mother's pardonable chiding.

"Martin Wilbour, are you crazy? Where is the rest of that cord?"

"I don't know," he replied placidly. "Thomas said I wasn't to wait a single minute, but come right away, so I came just as I was. Did you want me?"

"I want you to act like a sensible boy and not a baby. Go and wind up that cord."

With many shufflings and sighs Martin retraced his steps, like some allegorical character, and appeared presently with a bulging pocket.

"Now, Martin (please hold your shoulders more even; look how straight Thomas stands), I want you to make up your mind, once for all, on the subject of these pets of yours. When Mr. Car-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

michael gave you the guinea-pigs, you were perfectly delighted with them and nearly stuffed them to death; now you neglect them terribly. The guinea-hens you could have had quite a little money from if you had attended to the eggs and chicks; father offered to buy them regularly of you, he's so fond of them. But here it's the fourth time they've run away this week, and you can't even help Harvey hunt for them."

"Oh, well . . . why do all my pets have to be guinea-pets, anyway? I'll bet they don't like to be called that, and that's why they run away. You know, Myron called that big Italian a ginney and he nearly brained him with his shovel—"

"Martin!"

"Well, that's what Myron said—they just won't stand it. So it isn't lucky for pets, maybe."

"That's absurd, Martin—it's not the same thing at all."

"Why isn't it the same thing at all?"

"Well," she admitted, "if it *is* the same word, which I suppose it is, it certainly doesn't apply to pets. They're not likely to brain you with a shovel. Now, I'm going to make a definite rule, Martin, and you'll find that I mean it. If you can't take care of your pets, they will be taken away."

"Taken away?"



"NOW, MARTIN, PLEASE HOLD YOUR SHOULDERS
MORE EVEN"

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

“Disposed of.”

Susy looked at him with the air of one who finishes a situation absolutely; she had no doubt of the result.

Martin pursed his lips and eyed her calculatingly.

“How disposed of?” he said slowly.

“Oh, I don’t know—I’ll decide that later. I mean that you will be deprived of them; that’s the main thing.”

“Oh, I don’t mind about that. I don’t want ’em. But I think you ought to buy ’em off me. They’re mine.”

“‘Buy them *of* me!’ Why, Martin Wilbour! What do you mean?”

“I mean they’re too much trouble. They’re nice enough to have, but I forget them so.”

“But that’s just it; you ought not to forget them.”

“Oh, well, I’d *rather* forget them. I don’t think there’s as much fun to ’em as there is bother. What’s the good of ’em, anyway?”

Susy stared at him doubtfully; there was obviously nothing criminal in his preference, but she had not for long wanted to spank him so thoroughly.

“I don’t know what to make of you, Martin,” she began at length. “Are you in earnest?”

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"Why, yes," he said negligently. "Did you think I was fooling? I wouldn't be able to 'tend to 'em, anyway," he added with apparent irrelevance.

"It seems to me you say nothing but 'anyway,'" his mother observed. "All your remarks end with it.—I don't think your father will want you to be without any duties, however, Martin. If you don't care for your pets, we must find something regular for you to do; he doesn't want you to grow up as irresponsible as you are now."

He shot a curious look at her.

"I should think children would be about as much trouble as pets," he remarked casually.

"I can assure you they are," she replied with an absent glance at her watch. "Come, Thomas, if you want to take a drive with mother."

They left Martin busy with the straps and buckles of the bulging old suit-case, Thomas willingly deserting an elder brother who frankly found him in the way and deliberately escaped his offered company, Susy with a vague feeling that Martin was so changed she hardly knew what tone to take with him, and that there must be some way, if she only knew it, of training him into the consecutive habits she found so necessary to her present busy life. But it was not to be denied that Tom and Mr. Carmichael managed

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

him better; often, indeed, she had applied to the latter to use his influence with the boy in one of his obstinate moods, and seldom in vain.

She herself, oddly enough, appeared to have won an almost corresponding position with Ursula; though she was not yet particularly fond of the child, her practical, quick decisions impressed the little creature far more than her mother's philosophical theorizings, and the knowledge of this could not fail to soften Susy's heart toward her by little and little.

Mrs. Carmichael was stretched comfortably on a couch upon her up-stairs veranda, wrapped in a long coat, imbibing a late cup of morning chocolate. She smiled gently at her guest's almost accusing air of trig busyness, waved her to a seat, and fell into a more than usually prolonged fit of meditation, while Susy, more ruffled than she knew by Martin's unexpected flank movement in the matter of his pets, poured forth her tale of duties and responsibilities, concluding virtuously:

"And so I don't see how we can possibly get away, Edith, even for Sunday. You and Mr. Carmichael seem to run off whenever you want to—"

"Why, of course we do—why not? We haven't invented all these stable and barn-yard duties, you know. Of course, if you'd rather do them..."

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"Oh, dear! you begin, and you can't stop! I do want to do them, of course, or I wouldn't! But sometimes it seems as if Martin might be right. He told me to-day about those guinea-pigs that there wasn't as much fun to them as there was bother!"

"I quite agree with him," said Mrs. Carmichael placidly—"have for five years. And do you know, my dear Susy," she went on, looking suddenly with one of her keen, bird-like glimpses straight at her guest and losing utterly for the moment her air of transcendental revery—"do you know that you're getting just a little like the other back-to-the-soil people I know—just a little priggish about it?"

"Priggish? I? Why, Edith Carmichael, what do you mean?"

"I mean precisely what I say, my dear. There's nothing particularly virtuous in growing your own oats, you know. If you like to do it, all right; but you're fast getting to the stage where you thank God that you're not as other men are who don't. It's that I complain of in all you people. You get it into your heads, somehow, that you're making tremendous sacrifices for your particular fads and ought to be admired for your magnificent attitude, whereas, as a matter of fact, it's just like most fads—a matter of taste. If you'd

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

rather buy a car-load of guano than go for a week-end to Atlantic City, why, that's your affair. We wouldn't, that's all."

Susy looked somewhat consciously at the floor, and her hostess, refreshing herself with a swallow of chocolate, continued, with a distinct air of clearing her mind:

"It's not as if Tom was a farmer, you know. He's not; he's a lawyer, and makes a good in-



come at it. If you want to spend it on a country-place, well and good; but if you really want to save it for him, as you imply so constantly, you'd much better put it in the bank, I can assure you. Not that I am arguing for a moment that you *ought* to save it, you know. In fact, I distinctly

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

believe you oughtn't, unless he plans to retire early. I'd spend it, and get all the fun I could out of it—but don't put on so many airs over it. You collect heifers, and Mat collects tables, and as far as the investment goes, on the scale you both do it, he is really doing better. He can prove it to you, if you like."

"We came into the country for the children," Susy began defensively.

"Stuff and nonsense!"

Mrs. Carmichael sat up on her couch.

"Supposing you did, you got on very well for the first two years, didn't you? That was all right, that part of it. But the children don't need all those rods and rods of stone walls and all that swamp-draining, do they? Just admit that you and Tom like it and can afford it, and would rather do it than go to the opera, and I haven't a word to say. But don't look so virtuous when Mat and I patronize the livery-stable and hear *Pagliacci*—that's all!"

Susy looked thoughtful.

"But Edith," she began, "don't you really believe—"

"No, I don't. I know what you mean, of course: developing a country-place is better and more respectable than horse-racing, certainly. But it's no better, in your case, than anything else

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

that does no more harm. What I believe you do is just this, Susy: I believe you unconsciously compare it in your mind with what the Sunday papers call the 'social whirl,' and congratulate yourself that you're not wasting your time on what is known as the 'empty round' of dinners and operas and receptions and dressmakers that a certain set of people have identified themselves with in all the great cities of the world. But that class is so small—and you never belonged to it, anyway, did you? As I understand it, you got tired of the little you did of it, and took this up because you liked it better, on the whole.

"Just as I got tired of travelling, for a while . . . for a while . . ." she repeated musingly, "and came back here for a change. But anybody would think that you had abandoned the hollow joys of society and decided to raise pigs to the glory of God—whereas I think *I've* really done more for the country by pushing the rural free delivery back five miles, and keeping that vile saloon-man off the school-board, than you have with your corn-silo, that only benefited yourself, when you come to that.

"I only mention this," she concluded apologetically, "because you do act so, of late, Susy, as if you were so noble! I'm perfectly willing to

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

admit that I only wanted the fun of trying to run local politics—and I did, and it *was* fun!”

She settled back among her pillows and drained her cup. Susy, who had never heard her friend make so long a speech in the course of their acquaintance, was far more impressed by this one than as if her husband or Tom had been responsible for it, and remembered suddenly that Edith was famous for her occasional “papers” in the local women’s club.

“I see what you mean,” she admitted after a moment. “Tom says I’m getting rather snippy—whatever he means.”

“He means just that,” Mrs. Carmichael assured her, “though, of course,” she added conscientiously, “he’s awfully proud of all your executive ability, and all that. He told Mat he never dreamed you had it in you.”

Hostess and guest became thoughtful at this and stared at the blue sky, where the white clouds raced.

“Mat’s getting very restless,” Edith announced abruptly. “I’m prepared for anything nowadays.”

“Anything?”

Susy felt a distinct qualm; she had grown much attached to these interesting if somewhat erratic neighbors, and relied more than she realized on their friendly good-humor.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"Of course, I can't tell, but when he gets this way in the spring I always feel that something's in the wind. That's why I'm taking plenty of rest now."

Susy rose a little dispiritedly; this visit had given her much food for thought, and the list of duties on her little leather tablets seemed, somehow, less important and attractive than the picture of her friend's cushions and chocolate among the blue and white and green of the fresh, tempting day. It was on just such a day that she and Tom had driven Martin to his first school, long ago—how long it seemed, now! How jolly they had been, and what nonsense they had talked—it seemed as if they never talked anything but plans and bills and farm affairs now . . .

She unhitched Princess capably, and climbed into the wagon, still thinking. Along the road there trudged a familiar figure—only a little unusual from the absence of a small boy and girl, one hanging at either hand—a cracked, gilt-edged mirror under his arm.

"How are you?" he called cheerily. "Grand day, isn't it? See the eagle on this? I had to pay six dollars for it. I tell you, prices are going up, about here—it's time I moved!"

He fell into a steady, swinging walk beside the

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

phaeton (a favorite habit of his) and continued his customary desultory monologue.

"Yes, sir, it's time I kicked off the dust of this sophisticated spot—we're going to, by the way—did you know it?"

"Not really, Mr. Carmichael?"

Susy's voice showed her regret, and he acknowledged it with a whimsical nod.

"Yes, sir, I think we'll be off by the end of the summer."

"Where are you going?"

"Well, I rather think I'll try Australia," said Mr. Carmichael calmly.

Susy jumped and twitched her reins nervously.

"Why, Matthew Carmichael—what *do* you mean?"

"Why not?" he returned imperturbably. "Australia's a good place. And then I could look up my stuff, that poor old Brundage got, you know. I've never got over those wedding-chests, to tell the truth. Then I'd like to look into this ranch business a bit. Brundage's brother only needs a little capital to make a really good thing of his, he writes me, and I'd like to take a try at it."

"But—but—why, I never heard of anything so absurd! You hate farming—you set Tom against my sheep—"

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"Oh, well, there's nothing in it here," he interrupted, "it's too pottering. It's a very different story over there. And the climate would do wonders for Deedy, I think."

Susy gasped.

"Does she know about it?"

"No-o," he answered thoughtfully, "I don't believe she does, now I think of it—I didn't mention it. But I have an idea she suspects something's up, more or less. She's about ready to start, too, I imagine. Deedy gets very restless in the spring—drops all her fads, you know, and fusses around. I can't describe it exactly, but I always know."

Susy burst into laughter.

"You are the strangest couple I know!" she exclaimed. "You call it a fad to stay in one place, like a sensible, normal family, then?"

"Why, yes, I suppose I do," he said seriously. "It's just a matter of taste, isn't it?"

They were silent for a few yards, and then he put his hand on the wheel.

"I turn off here," he said. "There's an old square piano down this road I want the legs of. I hope you'll let Martin come over a lot till we go—Ursula will miss him badly. You—you wouldn't think of letting us take him along, I suppose?"

"Good gracious, no!" she cried. "The idea!"

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"I supposed not," he soothed her hastily, "but I can't help thinking it would be a great chance for the little fellow—between you and me we aren't likely to stay there forever."

Susy pulled Princess up abruptly.

"I think you are raving crazy!" she declared. "Why should it be a good thing for a ten-year-old boy to leave his home? What place could be better for him?"

Mr. Carmichael smoothed the tarnished mirror reflectively with his cuff.

"Oh, I don't know," he said vaguely. "That's only an American idea, you know. It depends a lot on the home and the boy, I should say, myself. The men around New York seem to see so little of their boys—I've always noticed it. And women can't bring boys up—not properly speaking, you know. And Martin's outgrown that school of his, Mrs. Wilbour—he really has. You ought to know it. He's a corking little fellow—perfectly corking. I'd give anything for one like him; but there's no denying he's pretty obstinate."

"I know," Susy admitted soberly; "we'll miss you with Martin a lot."

"I suppose Ursula's over at your place now," he said, turning to go and showing by his sudden brusqueness his masculine dread of having interfered in affairs not his own. Susy understood

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

and was grateful for the quick change; every one seemed unaccountably bent upon opening her eyes to unpleasant truths to-day.

"I suppose so," she answered carelessly. "They're probably hunting for you. Good-bye! Good-luck with the piano-legs!"

At the door Bell met her. "Mr. Wilbour won't be out till to-morrow, Mrs. Wilbour," she informed her. "He's got a board meeting to-night, he telephoned, and he'll be at the club, if you want him."

Susy's face fell. She had counted on Tom's sympathy in the matter of the Carmichaels' defection, and now something seemed to be looming up vaguely in Martin's future—something that troubled her, but for which she found no name nor remedy.

"How disgusting, Bell!" she complained.

"Yes'm," said Bell, lingering and looking at her oddly.

"Do you want anything, Bell?"

"I *didn't*, Mrs. Wilbour, first-off," the nurse began, "but since Mr. Wilbour's not going to be home to dinner, I might as well get it over first as last, I suppose. I s'pose it'll be a surprise to you, Mrs. Wilbour, but I'm thinking of making a change."

"Making a change?" Susy echoed stupidly.

"How, Bell?"

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY



“Leaving,” said Bell briefly, and put her apron in her mouth.

Susy stared sadly at her.

“Why, Bell—why, Bell, what is it?” she cried. “Anything I can help? Is it money?”

“Goodness, no, Mrs. Wilbour,” the girl assured her warmly, “of course not! I don’t earn my money as it is. That’s one reason. You see, Mrs. Wilbour, I’m a child’s nurse, when you come down to it, really, and who is there for me to nurse? Martin I don’t see from morning till night, off with that Ursula as he is, and those wild, rough boys,

and even Thomas can do all his back buttons now, every one. His father insisted on it, and I taught him, but it was like slapping me in

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

the face. I passed the remark to Myron Plummer at the time."

"Why, Bell!"

"Yes'm. And then when you went in and out so much, there was packing for you and hustlin' you off and hookin' you up, and your clo'es was more dressy, anyway. But now it's shirt-waists from morning to night, and mostly animals to take care of, and I never was no vet'rinary surgeon, Mrs. Wilbour, I tell you the truth."

"Why, but, Bell," Susy rallied, "if it's elaborate dresses you want, I could get a few, you know!"

"Oh no, Mrs. Wilbour," Bell replied seriously, "you needn't to bother—it wouldn't be any use. There's another reason, too, you see: I'm thinking of getting married."

"Oh, Bell, really? How nice!" Susy's generous pleasure shone in her face, and Bell gulped responsively.

"Then, of course, you don't want any better reason for leaving, Bell, dear! I'm so glad! Why didn't you say so at first? Who is it?"

Bell coughed and lifted a dry corner of her apron to her mouth, but thought better of it and smoothed her garments flat.

"Well," she said tentatively, as if prepared to change the object of her affection in case he should

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

not prove generally satisfactory, "it *was* Myron Plummer, Mrs. Wilbour."

Susy stared frankly at her.

"Myron Plummer?" she repeated. "Myron? Why, Bell, how—how very interesting!"

"Yes'm," said Bell quietly. "He's been at me a long time, but I always said not until Thomas could button his own back, I shouldn't feel justified in leaving."

Susy drew a long breath of relief.

"Then we sha'n't really lose you, after all, Bell," she began, "and Mr. Wilbour will start a cottage near the garden directly. If Myron had been married, he would have built one long ago. He wants some one near the melons."

"Yes'm," Bell returned uncomfortably, "but that's another thing. Myron said for me to tell you—you know what a man is! He's leaving, too."

"Myron!"

It seemed to Susy that the bottom had dropped out of existence; her world was crumbling around her.

"Where is he going?" she asked shortly.

"Well, he *did* think of Australia," Bell said tentatively, with the implication that he might make it China or the North Pole if that should appeal more to Susy.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"With Mr. Carmichael?" Susy queried sharply.

"Now, Mrs. Wilbour, you mustn't think that there was any urging," Bell declared earnestly. "You know that wasn't the way of it. Mr. Carmichael mentioned Australia last winter, just accidental like, in talkin' about the goat, and Myron's been wild to go there ever since he was a boy. He's been beggin' him ever since then to take him out there, *if* he went, and for the longest while Mr. Carmichael just laughed, and then he said he couldn't think of it, 'twould look as if he'd got him away from you, and he wouldn't do that for the world and all, and I said the same. But then Myron said he'd pay his own passage and mine, too, and go, whether or no, and hunt up Mr. Carmichael when he got there. And of course Mr. Carmichael couldn't prevent that, Mrs. Wilbour."

"No," Susy agreed dully, "no, of course not. Why does Myron think he'll like Australia?"

"I don't exactly know all the reasons," the nurse answered confidentially, "but he's dreadful anxious to see those kangaroos that are out there, and—"

"How utterly absurd!"

"Yes'm. But he is. They were in some geography he used to study, when he was a boy, and you know what a man is," Bell repeated resigned-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

ly. "And then he's always wanted sheep to handle, he says. He was dreadful disappointed that time you decided not to have the sheep—"

"It was Mr. Carmichael that persuaded us against them," Susy interrupted coldly.

"Yes'm. But that wasn't any of Myron's business, of course. Mr. Carmichael knows all about Myron, and he'd be his head man and sort of look out for his interest, he says, if he went in with Mrs. Brundage's brother. And Myron says that would suit him down to the ground."

There was a short silence.

"But you mustn't think, Mrs. Wilbour, that we'd leave you in a bad fix," Bell began again. "Myron says he wouldn't of left you before, when you were more helpless, like, but now you don't need him, really, he says; you can run the place yourself. And Harvey's all broke in to take Myron's place, and Harvey has a cousin up-State that would love to come and do the stable-work. It's very different now from what it was last year."

"Yes," Susy agreed drearily, "it certainly is. You mustn't think I'm nasty about it, Bell—I hope you and Myron will be very happy. Of course, you know we'll miss you terribly—terribly. Why, just think, Bell, you've been with me ten years!"

The two women looked at each other uncer-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY



tainly, then with a common impulse fell into each other's arms and cried refreshingly, and in the real sorrow of losing this faithful friend all Susy's bitterness at the manner of the loss was washed away, together, somehow, with her growing load of the day's discomforts. In a generous glow of enthusiasm for Bell's trousseau and emigrating outfit, for which she promptly announced herself responsible, the last bits of the morning passed, and she ate the dainty luncheon served with remorseful care by the nurse with a curious sense of chastened growth in spirit, a feeling of enlarged experience that made this morning seem a long, long stretch of time.

She found herself very tired after luncheon, and her hour of rest, snatched by Tom's stringent orders, at this point, turned into three of solid, dreamless sleep, at first, broken finally by strange reminiscent visions.

The years rolled back in these mysterious min-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

utes that can hold so much, and she seemed to be at once herself, with all their accumulated experience and the self of six years ago. She and Tom, Aunt Emma and Martin, relived their funny family life of Binks's babyhood; she listened, half weary, half amused, to his interminable stories, once he had found his slow-moving tongue; she argued with Bell over the propriety of Aunt Emma's psychological experiments with the quaint little creature who had been hardly more than an animate doll to her then, it seemed, in the light of her present responsibilities; she and he and Tom hung over the squirrels in the park, or wrestled spiritually with schemes of infantile punishment. Even further back the misty curtain rolled, and in puzzled half-memory that confused his dramatic babyhood with Thomas's uneventful past, she listened awe-struck to his first, his very first extraordinary ejaculations, heard the nurse's anguished gasp as he slipped beneath the soapy wavelets of his rubber bath-tub under Aunt Emma's unpractised handling, blushed hot again at Bell's reproof as she and Tom, singing mock-heroic duets above his cradle, had moved him to sudden roars of terror. Who was she—that Susy, or this? She had been so impractical then, so light-minded, they all said, and now, who was it that had just scolded her for her tiresome thrift

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

and a dogmatic round of duties held up for a test to everybody else? Who had blamed her about her baby, Binks? Who wanted to take her baby to Australia? Babies never left their mothers, surely!

A discreet but ceaseless knocking at the door of her room mingled with her dream, and, lo! it was at once the throb of the screw that drove the steamer to Australia, with tiny Binks in a gray squirrel-cap stretching out his arms to her at the broad stern, and the tap of Aunt Emma's foot against her sofa, as that good woman informed her niece's mind from dull histories and literary classics, in those last waiting days before ever Binks was, and she lay wondering what it would be like to be his mother. . . .

She struggled awake.

"Come in! What is it? Why, it's dark!" she murmured, and Bell entered, softly, but more quickly than usual, and breathless, even for her.

"Oh, Mrs Wilbour! Mrs. Wilbour!" she whispered hissing, "are you awake?"

"Yes, yes," Susy muttered drowsily, only half conscious as yet, and dimly confusing the warm blanket under her chin with Binks's downy, warm baby head, so that a wave of tenderness for him swept over her and she sat up suddenly.

"Where's Martin, Bell?" she asked, wide awake

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

now and eager for him, as she had not felt for many months. "Tell him to run in and see me, if he's here, will you?"

"Oh, Mrs. Wilbour, that's what I came for—Martin's eloped!"

Susy stiffened on her bed.

"What did you say?"

"He's eloped, Mrs. Wilbour. Isn't it awful?"

Susy slipped off the bed and threw apart all the curtains, letting in what late afternoon light there was.

"Are you crazy, Bell? Do you mean he's run away? How do you know?"

"I mean eloped," Bell persisted. "They left a letter. Mr. Carmichael brought it, and he's waiting to say he'll beat through the woods, and will you send the horses different ways to catch them, because they had money, he thinks, and maybe they took a train."

"They—they?" Susy queried, hastily slipping on her clothes and twisting up her hair with one hand while she tried to smooth out a crumpled piece of paper with the other. "Who are the other boys?" with a confused recollection of lads enticed by the glories of cheap detective stories and tales of Indian adventure.

"You don't elope with 'other boys,'" Bell informed her impatiently. "Don't you know what

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

elope is? Him and that nasty little Ursula are off together, and goodness knows if we'll see them again forever. She's cunning as a fox, Myron says."

Susy shook her head impatiently.

"Oh, Bell, how childish you are! Infants of that age can't *elope*! How—how idiotic! Pick up that collar-stud, please."

"You'll find Martin can," Bell insisted. "If he says they've eloped, they have, and that's why he mended the dress-suit case. His white duck suit is gone, and Mr. Wilbour's other razor, and that smelly shaving-soap Ursula used to poke her fingers into, and Thomas's harmonicum, and she's took her mother's best lace nightgown, the Carmichaels's Katey says—she was giving 'em a long sermon in the kitchen a day or two back about the lovely underclothes her mother took when she ran away with her father—you know the Carmichaels ran away to be married."

Susy's head swam.

"Oh, Bell, do stop talking, please! How can I think? Ought I to telegraph Mr. Wilbour?"

"Mr. Carmichael says no, ma'am, not to. Not till night, anyhow—he thinks he can trace 'em out—he's about sure they didn't go on any train, because his livery-boy meets every one, and he knows 'em well. And that's all he's worried

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

about. And if by any chance they did, he says Mr. Wilbour can hunt 'em up better right in New York."

Her first real alarm caught Susy. She read the crumpled note in Ursula's round, childish hand, half comprehendingly.

"DEAR DADDY AND MOTHER, *Martin and me are elopping. I took a lace nightgown just like you and daddy. Martin brok the bank. I know daddy and you are going somewhare and Martins parronts will not go ther. So we are elopping. When the baby comes and looks like you you will forgiv us like gramma Carmichael did you and daddy. If I do not sce you before then I will say goodby and I am your loving little daghtur Ursula Humphreys Carmichael, but my name is Wilbour now of coarse.*"

Susy burst into hysterical laughter and ran down the stairs.

"Oh, let me go with you—send Myron through the woods!" she begged of the pursuing parent before her, who sat, half alarmed, half ashamed, in a two-wheeled dog-cart before the door.

In a flash the same picture came to both of them: the long, dark hours up and down the country roads till moonrise, following the lantern's glimmer; the hope that took moving shad-

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

ows for realities; the sickening disappointments; the few pedestrians to question; the haunting, careless, omnipresent motor-cars; the horrid black pond at the end of the vista, that frames every father's and mother's vision of their runaways.

"All right—jump in!" he said briefly. "Somehow I have a feeling for the Old North Road—have you?"

"I haven't any at all," poor Susy confessed. "I never did seem to have those kind of feelings!"

They drove on at a slow trot along the echoing road; little red lights began to peep out in the scattered houses; evening had drawn in. The frogs set up a strident, chilly pipe; it seemed to Susy that she could never again hear their morbid cry without a sinking sense of fear sternly suppressed.

"I'll give 'em five miles—six, seven, each direction," Mr. Carmichael said abruptly. "They're good walkers, but that suit-case would hold 'em back, and they had a big lunch-basket besides."

They drove on for nearly an hour, peering from side to side, inquiring here and there at a farmhouse. In that silent hour Susy thought of many things, and not by any means of the children only. Many matters in her life slipped into a different aspect; many duties took on different proportions. There appeared to have been placed

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

a period, incomprehensibly, perhaps, but definitely, to a certain chapter of her life, and she felt a vague sense of change—wrenching, but not wholly unpleasant.

It was hardly a surprise to her when on their hailing a man in a covered cart looming up in the darkness with,

“Hello! have you seen a boy and girl with a suit-case?” an oddly familiar voice replied heartily:

“You bet I hev! It takes you, Mr. Carmichael, to track things out! I was puttin’ along ’s fast ’s I could to tell yer!”

“Why, it’s Eph!” Mr. Carmichael exclaimed, and the good-natured vegetable man roared a jovial assent.

“They’re all right, the young ones are,” he assured them again. “Go right along the way you’re goin’ and stop off at that old barn your father bought at the Miller auction—’member? Just take a peek in the door an’ see what ye see! That bull pup o’ yours is settin’ there, an’ I guess he means business, all right. I wa’n’t afraid ter leave ’em. I guess you’ll be some relieved, though, Mis’ Wilbour. But, shucks! you can’t lose a Carmichael!”

He clattered by them, and the dog-cart raced along the road and drew up before the deserted,

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

ramshackle barn. Mr. Carmichael detached the lantern in silence, and they peered in excitedly.

Full in the rays of the round tin reflector lay the most remarkable group that can ever have gratified the resentfully loving eyes of fond though deterring parents.

Martin and Ursula lay side by side on a piled couch of thin hay; their heads all but touched, and rested on the reclaimed dress-suit case with a curious Japanese effect. Ursula was lost, save for her mussed blue hair-ribbon, in billows and folds of an elaborate lace nightgown; one grimy hand protruded from a rose-knotted ruffle, one dusty russet shoe escaped the delicate hem. Laid neatly out beside her sleeping lord were a razor, a large porcelain jar of shaving-soap, and a nickel harmonicum. At their feet, in the relative position of the carved hound on a stone Crusader's bier, sat a brindled bulldog, watching a half-eaten chocolate-cake.

The father and mother looked at each other and burst into irrepressible laughter. The lovers woke, stared, rubbed their eyes, and grinned sheepishly.

"How'd you know where we were?" Martin demanded curiously, while Ursula fingered the ruffles of her nightgown with conscious pride in her suitable appearance.

A revulsion of feeling caught Susy,

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"Martin Wilbour," she said severely, "before we leave this barn you must give me your solemn promise never to do this again. Will you?"

Mr. Carmichael was gathering up impedimenta in a practical way and rescuing his daughter from her draperies.

Martin drew his toe stubbily along the dusty floor.

"N—no," he said slowly, "I won't—for I might. I think I'd better not."

They looked at each other in frank dismay; it was a dangerous deadlock, and both knew it. Mr. Carmichael whistled softly and led the unresisting Ursula to the dog-cart; the bulldog followed them. Susy and her son confronted each other in silence, and neither seemed able to move or speak, even when a second wagon dashed up to the barn and a man sprang out and rushed toward them. The moon swam up from a cloud and poured through the door, and Susy fell upon the man.

"Tom! Tom!" she cried joyfully, and then: "Oh, Tom, you must manage him—he won't mind me any more!"

She could not have told how they got into the old phaeton, nor when the others left them behind. But her head was on Tom's shoulder and



HER HEAD WAS ON TOM'S SHOULDER AND MARTIN'S ON HER KNEE

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

Martin's on her knee, and they were talking in low tones over his sleeping weight.

"—and first Edith scolded me for neglecting you and being generally nasty, and then Mat said they were going, and I forgot about Edith. And then Bell and Myron came, and I forgot the Carmichaels. And then Martin and Ursula, and I forgot Bell. But they were all true, Tom, and oh, Tom, *am* I sacrificing everybody? *Am* I horrid?"

"My dearest girl!" He kissed her very gently in the moonlight, and patted her hair comfortably. "We're getting a little stale, Toots darling, to tell the truth, both of us," he said slowly. "I've felt so for some time. Old Hartwell told me as much to-day. He wants me to take July and August off. Not working on the place, he says, but *off*. You know I only took two weeks last year. But I didn't know how you'd feel about it

"And, dear, I may as well tell you—I've done a rather high-handed thing about Binks, but there was no time to consult you, and—and anyway, I want you to think it's best. The board meeting was only half an hour, after all, and that's why I got out so early. Elliot was there—one of my classmates, and we got talking about our boys—his youngest is just Binkie's age. He sends him every summer to a vacation camp for little fellows run by one of his young teachers—

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

they hunt and fish and drill and get a lot of discipline generally. He won't take but fifteen—this young Westcott—and he has fourteen booked now; I didn't dare wait, for it struck me it was the very thing for the boy. Elliot says he's wonderful with them. And I always meant to send Binks to Elliot, some day. It's the best school I know; he's a fine man—one of the best men the college ever sent out.—Would you object?"

"No, Tom," she answered simply, "I think it might be a very good thing."

He drew a long breath.

"That's good," he said. "By-the-way, Ballantyne's boy, that went to Mrs. Trayner's, has gone for two years. He starts in with Elliot this fall."

"Why not let Martin do that, too?" she suggested quietly.

"Would you think of it, dear? I should like it of all things, but I was afraid you wouldn't. You see, I trust Elliot perfectly, and the vacations are long. And he's developing very fast, dear."

"Yes, I know. And, Tom, I was thinking . . . would you like it if I asked Aunt Emma to come for July and August and look after Thomas and the place—and you and I go away together?"

"Would I like it! Tootie, would you—*would* you?"

"Of course we *could* go abroad, but I thought

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

it might be nice to go to Maine again—do you remember what good times we had at Wishemunkeewa?”

“Toots, you are certainly the sweetest . . .”

“And I could get some new clothes, and Aunt Em won’t spend half on the place we’d be tempted to, you know. She’d love to come—perfectly love to, and she gets on beautifully with Thomas. Do you remember, Tommy, how Martin jumped on your fishing-rod at Wishemunkeewa and broke it, and you went out to spank him, and he told you you couldn’t spank with a curved stick?”

Tom chuckled softly.

“I’ll never forget that.”

Martin did not move his head from her knee, but his voice broke startlingly clear in the still night.

“I woke up,” he said. “If I can go to Mr. Westcott’s Indian camp, I’ll promise never to elope again—never. I know all about it. Craig Ballantyne told me. You have to have a flannel sleeping-bag and a bar of soap and six towels each. They wear moccasins. If you don’t tell the truth, he fires you.”

“I don’t think he’ll fire you, Binks,” Tom said affectionately.

“No. But there’s one thing you’d better learn right away—don’t say Binks any more, please, father.”

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOY

"We usually say Martin, dear, don't we?" Susy reminded him softly.

"You mustn't say that, either." He raised his head.

"Then, what?" they asked in bewilderment.

He sat up proudly.

"You must call me 'Wilbour' now," he said; "that's what they'll say at Elliot's—'young Wilbour!'"

They stared at each other.

"Tommy," she whispered, in a hush, "is it really true? Is everything changed as much as that?"

"Nonsense," he said gayly, "nonsense, sweetheart! It's only Binks that's grown up—we're just the same."

And again they kissed each other in the yellow moonlight.



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